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PINTER AND THE SURREALISTS

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Pinter and the Surrealists" submitted by Jennifer Atkins in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the surrealist origins of Harold Pinter's absurdist theatre. Chapter one first of all discusses various theories of surrealism with respect to the concepts and definitions of art prevalent among the surrealists. André Breton's writings are considered in some detail, in conjunction with the work of a number of the chief surrealists, both writers and artists. Surrealist techniques dealing with the unconscious, with dream, with "chance art", with the transformation of the commonplace, etc., are examined, and the qualities of surrealist imagery, relying on incongruity and shock, are related to subsequent developments within the scope of the Theatre of the Absurd. Antonin Artaud's position as one-time surrealist and as precursor of the absurdist theatre movement is seen as pivotal. Artaud looks backward to primitive theatre and forward to Pinter and a theatre which tries to come to terms, however precarious, with irrationalism.

Chapter two of this thesis turns from the surrealist backgrounds of Pinter's plays to the plays themselves, and to his particular kind of absurdist theatre. Pinter's genius for creating mystery from banality and for enveloping his plays with an atmosphere of pervasive insistent menace is related to the perspectives of mystery and banality in surrealist painting, in particular, that of René Magritte. With Magritte, Pinter seems to have an uncanny affinity, not only as a creative artist, but also in the explanations he has offered in answer to questions about his work. The concept of minimal art, which relying on repetition and duration refuses to offer explanations, is detected as actuating the work of some surrealists, especially Magritte, and also the work of Pinter. In conclusion, chapter two discusses the ultimate development of minimal art, silence, in relation to Pinter's dramatic growth.

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CHAPTER I

AN APPROACH TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD VIA SURREALISM

Surrealism: the prehensile tail of Romanticism

The tendency to seek a compensation for life through art, and of art through life was present with poets such as Byron, Keats and Shelley. Stephen Spender characterises such tendencies as "'alternate life of art' movements", and amongst them he includes surrealism. He describes the features of this alternate life as follows:

The tendency here is to regard writing as hallucinatory: that is to say as a literary technique for inducing non-literary sensations. The poet, supposedly, has a peculiar insight into life-sensations which he upholds as more "real" than the externals which are everyday reality. The surrealists used poetry as a technique for inducing states of mind supposedly super-real. It might be said that surrealist writing is itself the super-reality, but if this were true, it would only be in the way that incantation may itself be what is invoked: a strangeness of feeling without language that lies beyond the threshold of words. However much one disapproves of non-literary aims in literature, nevertheless there is importance for literature itself in the view of writing as provider of alternate life. For we live in a time when material values are generally regarded as the most important ones. . . . All the "alternate life of art" movements attempt to discover through art, or to use art to discover, spiritual, sensual or esoteric forces, which restore the balance of inner life against industrialised societies.¹

Spender makes the distinction between this tendency and art which hopes to inspire a transformed society; however, in the case of surrealism, such a hope was constantly expressed. The surrealists set out in search of both revolution and dream, social actions and the unconscious, goals which Camus, in The Rebel,² sees as incompatible. However, for the surrealists, the middle terms were love, that recurring myth, and humour,

the anti-myth. Poetic inspiration was for many surrealist poets identified with passion for a single woman, although as a group they advocated sexual liberation.

I have found the secret
Of loving you
Always for the first time.³

Of surrealism's contribution, for he grudgingly admits it had one, despite his distaste for it, Camus writes:

Magic rites, primitive or naive civilisations, alchemy, the language of flowers, fire or sleepless nights, are so many miraculous stages on the way to unity and the philosopher's stone. If surrealism did not change the world, it furnished it with a few strange myths which partly justified Nietzsche's announcement of the return of the Greeks. Only partly, because he was referring to unenlightened Greece, the Greece of mysteries and dark gods. Finally, just as Nietzsche's experience culminated in the acceptance of the light of day, surrealist experience culminated in the exaltation of the darkness of night, the agonised and obstinate cult of the tempest.⁴

Surrealism may have ultimately come to this impasse, through its frenzied explorations of the unconscious, but its philosophical contradictions perhaps reflect no more than the contradictions of the unconscious: those principles which we might term 'the life force', and the 'death wish'. Compare Giorgio de Chirico's faceless, melancholy figures with the warm, lively apparitions of Marc Chagall. Both represent imaginative fantasy; both are trying to present the hidden qualities of things, but Chirico seems to have stepped completely into the dark side of introspection, while Chagall reflects a positive affirmation of life and its possibilities. There is another distinction to be made here, apart from the death versus life tendency: the exploitation of the unconscious per se, and the cautious use of it to enrich consciousness. Neither approach denies the value of the unconscious, but the former is more extreme in its use of it, and can lead, some psychologists believe, to the retreat of consciousness, and thence to

the dangerously dual nature of the psychic spirit. The Jungian psychologist, Aniela Jaffé, writing in Jung's Man and His Symbols, sees surrealism as trying to provide an answer to the question of the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious:

What he [Breton] sought was a reconciliation of opposites, consciousness and the unconscious. But the way he took to reach his goal could only lead him astray. He began to experiment with Freud's method of free association as well as with automatic writing, in which the words and phrases arising from the unconscious are set down without any conscious control. . . . But that process simply means that the way is opened to the stream of unconscious images, and the important or even decisive part to be played by consciousness is ignored . . . it is consciousness that holds the key to the values of the unconscious, and that therefore plays the decisive part. . . . Only in an interplay of consciousness and the unconscious can the unconscious prove its value, and perhaps even show a way to overcome the melancholy of the void. If the unconscious, once in action, is left to itself, there is risk that its contents will become overpowering or will manifest their negative, destructive side.⁵

However, Jaffé looks inevitably at the unconscious from the analyst's point of view; the surrealists did not see themselves as patients but as probers of the domain first methodically explored by Freud. Despite Breton's grandiloquent pronouncements that dream was to be integrated with reality, surrealism's best achievements, it seems to me, lie in its passionate romanticisation of love through poetry, and its humourous use of contradictions, in both poetry and the arts.

There is much exuberance in surrealist works, as well as playfulness and wry humour which seems to deny the assertion that surrealist art is withdrawn, introspective and aberrant. Even the paranoia of Dali can hardly be taken more seriously, from the psychologist's viewpoint, than the anagram of his name, 'Avidadollars'. The surrealists' intense concern for the object made animate would seem to offer further evidence of the movement's awareness of something other than the internal life. Robert Masters, in his book Psychedelic Art, sees the intent of both

surrealist and psychedelic art to shock the viewer into awareness, and provides a fairly balanced comparison of the two rather similar trends:

Psychedelic artists, like surrealist artists, are concerned with depth probes of the psyche and create a basically psychological art. As art movements we can say of both what Patrick Waldberg has said of the surrealists, that: "it is not a question of a school or formal movement, but of a spiritual orientation." . . . But psychedelic art appears to have a values base that is favorable to growth and to the production of a less limited art than could arise from the surrealist world view and understanding of the mind. Psychedelic artists do not, by and large, consider that they are dealing with the marvellous. Inward realities are not necessarily more real than external ones. . . .

Surrealism was exclusive; psychedelic art is inclusive: it does not withdraw from the external world, but rather affirms the values of inwardness as complementary awareness. The aim of psychedelic experience is to expand the consciousness so that it can be a consciousness of more. . . . It seeks out the images and other phenomena to be found in the depths of the normal but expanded mind. . . . In some ways more naive than surrealism, psychedelic art has yet to work its way through a kind of wonder at the realities uncovered in the altered states. Particularly, psychedelic art tends to be naive in its metaphysical outlook and in its religious and mystical awareness. These are generally shallow and rather primitive.⁶

Perhaps psychedelic art is then the inevitably surrealistic legacy of our technological age; there is little mysticism or revelation in the brilliant reproductions of art in Master's book. However, the psychedelic artists have been able to prove, admittedly with chemical means, that the universe exists inside one, a belief always maintained by the surrealists.

What is surrealism?

In a spirit of dedicated enthusiasm, for he was certainly not modest, at least regarding his claims for the surrealist mode, André Breton gave recipes and guides to what he termed "the secrets of the magical surrealist art," such as the following:

After you have settled yourself in a place as favorable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have writing materials brought

to you. Put yourself in as passive, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. Forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything. Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to your consciousness which is only crying out to be heard. . . . Go on as long as you like. Put your trust in the inexhaustible nature of the murmur.⁷

In the same earnest spirit, Breton gave other gems of advice such as how "to make speeches", "to write false novels" and "how to catch the eye of a woman you pass in the street"; this last advice consisted of five rows of small dots. . .

Is this not a clear and concise, if sly, explanation of the creative process, and more accessible to the non-poet than the 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' formula which we associate with the Romantic poets? The surrealists of course would have it that memory is the assassin of true poetic thought. However, their method of artistic inspiration is in itself a form of recollection, but without the sense of deliberation that that word implies, for "psychic automatism" as Breton termed it in his definition of surrealism taps the cellars of the subconscious.

Breton, in his Manifestoes of Surrealism, was seriously concerned to identify what he termed a "turn of thought" which he believed peculiarly distinctive of our time. This "turn" he defended thus in his Manifesto of 1924:

We are still living under the reign of logic: this, of course, is what I have been driving at. But in this day and age logical methods are applicable only to solving problems of secondary interest. The absolute rationalism that is still in vogue allows us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience. Logical ends, on the contrary, escape us. It is pointless to add that experience itself has found itself increasingly circumscribed. It paces back and forth in a cage

from which it is more and more difficult to make it emerge. It too leans for support on what is most immediately expedient, and is protected by the sentinels of common sense. Under the pretense of civilisation and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices. It was, apparently, by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer — and, in my opinion by far the most important part — has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud. . . . the human explorer will be able to carry his investigations much further, authorised as he will henceforth be not to confine himself solely to the most summary realities. The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights. If the depths of our mind contain within it strange forces capable of augmenting those on the surface, or of waging a victorious battle against them, there is every reason to sieze them — first to sieze them, then, if need be, to submit them to the control of our reason.⁸

In Breton's small book What is Surrealism, which covers some of the major arguments and thoughts of the earlier manifestoes, he quotes a passage of Pierre Naville's, which gives a succinct comment on surrealism:

Surrealism is at the crossroads of several thought-movements. We assume that it affirms the possibility of a certain steady downward readjustment of the mind's rational (and not simply conscious) activity towards more absolutely coherent thought, irrespective of whatever direction that thought may take; that is to say that it proposes or would at least like to propose a new solution of all problems, but chiefly moral. It is indeed, in that sense that it is epoch-making. That is why one may express the essential characteristic of surrealism by saying that it seeks to calculate the quotient of the unconscious by the conscious.⁹

Surrealism is thus not, at least in its intentions, a mindless trip to the unconscious; it is rather an optimistic use of the unconscious, expressed through conscious techniques.

The dialectic of surrealism

André Breton has outlined as follows, the conditions in art which led to the surrealist mode:

Now in the modern period, painting for example, up until the last few years, concerned itself almost uniquely with expressing the obvious

relationships that exist between the perception of the outside world and the ego. The expression of this relationship proved to be less and less satisfactory, more and more disappointing as it turned in circles and found itself increasingly prevented from enlarging, and even more so, by definition, from getting to the bottom of man's "perception-consciousness" system. As it was put forward at this juncture it was in fact, a closed system in which the most interesting possibilities of reaction on the part of the artist had long been exhausted, and which allowed nothing to exist except an extravagant concern to defy the external object, a concern that the work of many a great so-called "realist" painter bears the mark of. Photography was to deal it a decisive blow by mechanising to the extreme the plastic mode of representation. Because it did not accept the necessity of engaging in a struggle with photography that was discouraging even before it was begun, it was necessary for painting to beat a retreat so as to take up an impregnable position behind the necessity of expressing inner perception visually. It must be admitted that painting thereby found itself forced to take possession of a terrain that lay fallow. . . .

The only domain left for the artist to exploit became that of pure mental representation, such as it extends beyond that of true perception without for all that being identical with the hallucinatory domain. . . . The important thing is that recourse to mental representation (outside of the physical presence of the object) furnishes, as Freud has said "sensations related to processes unfolding in the most diverse, and even the deepest layers of the psychic mechanism." In art the necessarily more and more systematic search for these sensations works toward the abolition of the ego by the id, and consequently it endeavours to make the pleasure principle hold clearer and clearer away over the reality principle.¹⁰

Herbert Read, that great pontificator about art in its social setting, has explained that art requires tension, and tensions may be restored by a return to tradition, or alternatively by a leap into a "new and original state of sensibility."¹¹ This leap inevitably involves a revolt against conventions to create new conventions more in accordance with a contemporary consciousness. Read, with his Marxist bent, naturally sees art as inextricably connected with the social context; the classical principle thus is arrayed with the forces of order and repression in society, while the romantic principle or spirit stands for the forces of creation and liberation. In this way, surrealism can simply be seen as an extension of the Romantic principle, since it calls for a revision of aesthetic values, allied to a strong social purpose, embodied in Marx's

call to "transform the world," a call taken up by the surrealists in imaginative as well as social terms. Read does much to clarify the dialectic of the artistic process endorsed by the surrealists, explained at dizzying length in Breton's brilliant Manifestoes. Read characterises the surrealist claim as follows:

If we consider the natural world we soon become aware that its most striking characteristic is not permanency, solidity or stability, but continuous change or development. . . . Dialectics is nothing more than a logical explanation of how such a change takes place. . . . The change must take place in a definite way. Between one phase and another of that development there must intervene an active principle, and Hegel suggested that this principle was actually one of opposition and interaction. That is to say, to produce any new situation (i.e., any departure from an existing condition of equilibrium) there must previously exist two elements so opposed to each other and yet so related to each other that a solution or resolution is demanded; such a solution being in effect a new phase of development (temporary state of equilibrium) which preserves some of the elements of the interacting phases, eliminates others, but is qualitatively different from the previously existing state of opposition. . . .

What I wish to stress now is that surrealism is an application of the same logical method to art. By the dialectical method we can explain the development of art in the past and justify a revolutionary art at the present time.

In dialectic terms we claim that there is a continual state of opposition and interaction between the world of objective fact—the sensational and social world of active and economic existence—and the world of subjective fantasy. This opposition creates a state of disquietude, a lack of spiritual equilibrium, which it is the business of the artist to resolve. He resolves the contradiction by creating a synthesis, a work of art which combines elements from both these worlds, eliminates others; but which for the moment gives us a qualitatively new experience—an experience on which we can dwell with equanimity. Superficial critics may pretend to be unable to distinguish such a qualitatively new state from an ordinary compromise, and it is to be feared that in practice most dialectical solutions are of this kind. But a true synthesis is never a reversion; it is always a progression.

That is the central core of the surrealist claim, and any attempt to discredit or criticize surrealism must present an adequate philosophical alternative; just as any criticism of dialectical materialism as embodied in the socialism of Marx must present an adequate philosophical alternative. At present any alternative in art worthy of our consideration is lacking.¹²

Thus the essence of surrealist adherence to dialectical materialism, frequently mentioned by Breton in his Manifestoes, is that the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the mind and trans-

lated into images. Of course, the processes of reflection and translation involve journeys through a series of distorting mirrors and submerged labyrinths.

The surrealist image

. . . the cultivation of the effects of a systematic bewildering. . .

— Max Ernst

This is the phrase which Ernst, one of the chief surrealist painters, used to characterise the poetic procedures pursued by the surrealists in their research on the mechanism of inspiration. In explaining, in material terms, Lautréamont's famous phrase, "as beautiful as the fortuitious meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table,"¹³ Ernst goes on to say,

A ready-made reality, whose naive purpose seems to have been fixed once and for all (an umbrella), finding itself suddenly in the presence of another very distant and no less absurd reality (a sewing machine), in a place where both must feel out of their element, will, by this very fact, escape its naive purpose and lose its identity; because of the detour through what is relative, it will pass from absolute falseness to a new absolute that is true and poetic: the umbrella and the sewing machine will make love. The way this procedure works seems to me to be revealed in this very simple example. A complete transmutation followed by a pure act such as love will necessarily be produced every time that the given facts—the coupling of two realities which apparently cannot be coupled on a plane which apparently is not appropriate to them—render conditions favourable.¹⁴

Paralleling the verbal creation of such startling images, the surrealists created objects, which betray what Breton termed "the livid light of the useful." The real may thus be transformed by man's approach to it, as in Meret Oppenheim's famous surrealist object, which consists of a fur-lined cup, saucer and spoon. This object is certainly reminiscent of things we use daily, but we can have none of our usual

assurance in handling or contemplating it. It constitutes a surrealist fact, defined as "any discovery changing the nature, the destination of an object or phenomenon."¹⁵ Perhaps more than any other surrealist painter, Magritte has succeeded in making the familiar, strange and marvellous, with his images of boots as living feet, and his fish suspended between bowler-hatted businessmen. Magritte himself has written that:

The principal value of surrealism seems to me to be that it has re-introduced the marvellous into everyday possibilities. It has taught that if reality seemed baleful and flat it is because man did not know how to see, his glance was limited by an education deliberately intended to blind him and by an aesthetic censor inherited from past ages.¹⁶

Julien Levy has characterised Magritte as changing "the import of each image by changing their juxtaposition, much as one does with single words."¹⁷

The multi-dimensionality of images has been brilliantly exploited by Salvador Dali, who has termed his method that of "concrete irrationality"; in his painting Accommodations of Desire (1929)¹⁸ the large white objects may be seen as stones, as ovae, as testicles, or as giant hard eggs. The different roles that images can play in the human imagination, the archetypal as well as the commonplace associations, are stimulated by Dali's paranoia. It is simultaneity of perception he induces; we cannot disregard the exotic within the ordinary. The desire of human beings to invest the everyday with excitement, to perform different roles to this end, has been used to advantage in the theatre also; Jean Anouilh's play The Rehearsal makes ironic use of our ability to confuse appearance with reality, and Harold Pinter has produced two characters in his play The Lover, who find themselves ultimately unwilling, or unable, to control and separate their dual personalities.

The everyday is mysterious

For most of us, I suppose, the plethora of objects which surround us are more a source of tyranny than of inspiration. However, for the surrealist the material world of 'things' can be a liberating take-off point for imagination and humour. Oppenheim's Lunch in Fur, Dali's Aphrodisiac Jacket, and Duchamp's ready-mades testify¹⁹ to this imaginative use of objects, a mocking attitude which André Breton codified into a surrealist doctrine. In his article, Beauty will be Convulsive, Breton states:

In my opinion, there can be no beauty—convulsive beauty—except at the price of the affirmation of the reciprocal relationship that joins an object in movement to the same object in repose. I am sorry not to be able to reproduce here a photograph of a very handsome locomotive after having been abandoned for many years to the fever of a virgin forest.²⁰

How to attain the imaginative surprise contained in the everyday?

Julien Levy reports on the following methods, in connection with René Magritte's work:

The method itself consists in isolating the object by breaking off its ties with the rest of the world in a more or less brutal or in a more or less insidious manner. We may cut off a hand and place it on the table, or we may paint the image of a cut-off hand on the wall. We may isolate by using a frame or by using a knife, but even more by a deformation, or a modification, in the substance of an object—a woman without a head, a hand of glass. Or by a change of scale—a lipstick the height of a forest. Or by a change of scenery—the Louis-Phillipe table on a field of ice, a statue in the ditch.²¹

Thus for the surrealist, the important search is not for current, actual appearances of things, but for their latent significance; and often the simplest objects are the most enigmatic, the most capable of arousing our subjective response. However, as Anna Balakian points out:

Surrealist art is not abstract art. Instead of purifying them (i.e., objects) into a state of abstraction, the artist, quite to the contrary, attempts to heighten their physical reality. The painter's job was to study objects, break down their normal associations—a process of *dépaysement* (disorientation) and endow objects with new functions and

new relationships.²²

This breaking down of conventional associations took many forms with surrealist painters; the soft watches of Dali, and Picasso's characteristic distortions of human form are perhaps the most obvious examples. The possibilities of association between objects is developed with the dual object, or image, such as Dali's Apparition of Face and Fruit-dish on a Beach (1938)²³ where the outer limit of the eye structure forms the bottom of the bowl and the table on which the bowl stands adopts the curves of the face it latently contains. Juxtaposition of distant, non-associative realities is also one of the trademarks of surrealist painting; one of the most striking examples of this is Marc Chagall's fusion of a fish, a violin, a hand, a swinging pendulum cracking down into a peaceful countryside, and a pair of undisturbed lovers, into a work entitled Time is a River Without Banks (1930-39).²⁴ However, the most evolved forms of surrealist art, as Balakian notes, are concerned with the "virtual fabrication of new objects, and thereafter objects intermingle in an atmosphere all their own, governed by new laws of perspective, and against a new visual horizon."²⁵ René Magritte's Le Modele Rouge (1935)²⁶ is just such a new object: it starts by being a foot and ends up with the properties of a boot, attaining a unity all of its own. But perhaps the most creative and potent expression of the 'inscape' lies in the apocryphal work of Yves Tanguy, who seems to express with his strange-yet-familiar objects, which defy gravity and the finite, a landscape which science seems to have made possible with the confrontation of infinity in outer-space travel. Balakian sums up the basic optimism of surrealism in the following passage:

Artists have always been first to present their visions, and the scientists have then provided substance for these conjectures of the imagination. The surrealists on their road to the absolute were in search of new myths to symbolise the new visions. The myth of Sisyphus is obsolete, even with modern variations, for it is the artistic symbol of a social reality that has been long extinct. It is no longer in the nature of man to roll stones, but to cut them, not to struggle up mountains but to blast passages through them, as centuries of his history can attest. . . . The myth of Sisyphus (as well as that of Icarus) is incompatible with the astronaut's mission of conquest.²⁷

Was surrealism then a new kind of Renaissance? In its attitude of energetic curiosity concerning the limits of the human mind, and determination to transcend the known, the established relationships of matter, surrealism seems to ally itself qualitatively with the spirit of a Leonardo da Vinci, who is said to have stared at the cracks in ceilings and walls for inspiration.

Art minus ego

Surrealism grew out of Dada, which, as J. H. Matthews points out, is a term separable from Dadaism:²⁸ Dada represents the spirit, the attitude of unconventionality in art; Dadaism was the movement inspired by this spirit, and in practice, says Matthews, "was often too involved in the processes of rejection and destruction to keep in view long-term ambitions."²⁹ Matthews is concerned in his book on surrealism to establish that this separation did not occur in the surrealist movement, and that its proponents were constantly aware that we can gain nothing by rejecting life, that man and the universe are not irreconcilable. As Breton remarked in an interview in October 1946, the surrealists "do not regard as incurable the 'fracture' observed by Camus between the universe and the human mind."³⁰

One of the chief ideas of Dada, which was also common to surrealism was that the conventions of art and creative effort should be sacrificed in favor of purely mechanical processes that leave everything to chance. This involved eradicating ego from art, and makes of the artist a medium rather than a creator. The artist thus becomes distanced, a position with which we are familiar in our contemporary developments in pop art (Andy Warhol's soup can), 'found' and concrete poetry. The whole value of surrealism is thus tied up with the definition, or limits, of art itself. Many of the detractors of the kinds of things we are now seeing in our art galleries (haphazard arrangements of blocks, beams, walls lined with tinfoil) protest that if a work of art does not consciously stimulate our intellect, it is, ergo, not a work of art. On this basis they reject the bizzarrities of pop art, computer art, psychedelia, and concrete poetry as gimmicks, insulting to the public. This is the inevitable reaction of those who feel that the artist must be a serious, concerned individual, with hard-won techniques and a sense of responsibility to his public. To the Dadaists and the surrealists, this type of artist has confined the limits of art, and thereby, human consciousness, as well as being in some cases, a pompous ass. Just as we have made the marvellous familiar, covering our livingroom walls with reprints of 'masterpieces', why should we not also make the familiar marvellous, by hanging brasso pads, and paint-by-number kits (Warhol) in the insular sanctum of the art gallery? One of the most supreme examples of art as mixture of environment was the house in Hanover of the German Dadaist artist, Kurt Schwitters: Schwitters made part of his house into an enormous 'objet trouvé' using material from rubbish cans, making a microcosm of pre-

war Germany inside his house, on the theory that a culture reveals itself by what it throws away..

Continuity or blind accident?

These two terms, which are really sides of the same coin, characterise much of existence as we analyse it; the desire to make meaning out of chaos, to form a 'gestalt' through our sensory and mental filters is strong within all of us. This is perhaps why such contemporary literature, which utilises the flip side, the dark side, of the coin, mystifies and frustrates. In discussing the surrealists' value of objective hazard, more roughly, coincidence, Roger Shattuck identifies as follows this flux between despair and wonder:

On the one hand, a deep-seated continuity appears to link all things and all events and to lend them a significance that provokes our wonder. Whether this continuity is seen as material or ideal, magical or rational, it fills us with a sense of being able to reckon with life; we shall always be able finally to relate one segment to another if we possess the patience and the insight and the energy to enter fully into the world within our reach. On the other hand, we frequently reach the point at which the routine, the falsity, and injustice of life inflict on us a feeling of senselessness; things happen without any evident explanation beyond mechanical temporal sequence. In this vision of the world no meaning attaches to events and things, and any effort at insight or sympathy ends in despair. To fill the void we may assign arbitrary meanings to familiar objects and actions, but such meanings shrivel up and die under our very eyes. Life never holds its savour. In the first view, everything has significance; the world is filled and its parts held in place by connections. . . . In the second view, nothing has structure or significance; the world barely holds its own against collapse.³¹

One might term the first view destiny, an optimistic vision of events, that we see in much of Dickens' work; the second view Shattuck terms chance, blind accident "working as the minimal propulsive force between one instant and the next but never bestowing meaning on the happenings thus touched off."³² This is the attitude found in much existentialist

literature, such as Kafka's and Camus' works. Both views can be contained in the word fate, which implies a destiny determined by a game of chance. Although the existentialist perhaps sees blind chance as proof of disorder, the irrationality of the universe which makes of man a caricature, the conclusion that therefore man is basically absurd, is not the only conclusion. Logic will perhaps not explain why we have thirty-two teeth, but it is, however, very convenient to have that number. The surrealists did not dismiss coincidence, or find it cause for despair, but seized these random moments, whose singularity give them meaning, as an 'open sesame' to the fabric of ordinary experience. Indeed they affirmed such moments as the only true reality, as expressing both destiny and chance, randomness and hidden order. The surrealist life supreme would be a life entirely made up of such coincidences. Hence the surrealist games of chance, initiative activities to uncover irrationality.

Surrealist games involving chance were chiefly limited to words: the operation of chance in surrealist painting can be seen in such techniques as collage, decalomania, frottage, grattage and fumage. Decalomania involves spreading gouache to a sheet of paper, which is then covered with another sheet; the sheets are pressed together, the top sheet removed, and then reapplied to the lower one until the gouache has dried. Frottage was discovered by Max Ernst and involves rubbing a blank surface with sheets of paper previously rubbed with black lead. Grattage and fumage, as their names imply, consist in random techniques through mechanical means: scratching a painted surface, haphazardly distributed with colours, and interpreting smoke trails left by a candle flame on a smooth surface. The random techniques we are accustomed to in contem-

porary art, such as riding a bicycle over pools of paint, are extensions of these early surrealist practices. Michael Kirby, in his book Happenings, relates the present stylistic tendencies in happenings to the methodical use of chance by Dada and surrealism.³³ This influence is not of course the only one Kirby discerns in the development of the happening: music, in particular John Cage's work, dance, collage and the notion of the found environment are others.

The best known of the surrealist verbal games is the one entitled Exquisite Corpse, which takes its name from the first striking phrase produced by the surrealists in playing this game: "the exquisite corpse will drink new wine." It is something like the children's game of "consequences." A sentence is constructed, by having each person write, without collaboration, a noun, adjective, verb and so on to form a grammatically correct sentence. J. H. Matthews quotes the following examples of results obtained in this way: "The senegal oyster will eat the tricolor bread"; "The dormitory of friable little girls puts the odious box right."³⁴ Another form of the game is "if. . . when" in which the player writes a hypothetical phrase beginning with "if" or "when"; separately he writes a phrase in the form of a proposition in the future or conditional tense. The two phrases are simply merged, to form amusing and striking examples such as the following:

If there were no guillotine
Wasps would take off their corsets

When aviators will have reached the seventh heaven
Statues will order themselves cold suppers.

If octopuses wore bracelets
Boats would be drawn by flies.³⁵

In a series of articles in the Times Literary Supplement on the avant-garde, an interesting variant was described, on what might be termed

chance art using coincidence as the mainspring for a combination of several media. Emmett Williams' "5000 New Ways" was a synthesis, which combined randomly in performance projections of images, ordinary and exotic sounds and 5000 phrases all of which began with "the new way." One of the examples quoted was a combination of the line, read aloud, "the new way the maiden heads," an image on the screen of a \$100 bill, and the sound of a draining sink: each of which was randomly selected.³⁶ In the same supplement, Margaret Masterman advocated a gay and creative use of the great contemporary arbiter of chance, the computer; to make art, specifically what she terms semantic toy models of language. She reports that the Manchester University computer was made to write love letters such as the following:

DEAR HONEY-DEW
 you are my greatest
 whiskers my utter
 moonbeam
 yours beautifully

Manchester University computer.³⁷

Are such things nonsense or not? Although the article argues that they are not nonsense, the question is really irrelevant; if nonsense, then charming nonsense, and to dismiss such experiments is to remain locked in primitive fear of the machine. The computer here behaves much as the 'drunk poet', as Masterman points out, because it can be thus taught to "damp down the enormous permutational resources of the whole language so that tolerable conceptual and semantic associations are formed."³⁸ In this sense, the computer is an aid in understanding the complexity of the poetic pattern, and Masterman suggests that it would be more appro-

priate to have a 'real' poet feed it, rather than the thesaurus.

The acceptance of contradiction

Nicholas Calas, surrealist poet and critic, mentioned in an interview³⁹ three features fundamental to the aesthetic character of surrealism: objective hazard, estrangement of sensation, and black bile or humor. The latter two features lead to incongruity, and thereby to wit and laughter. Herbert Muller, while criticising surrealism's philosophy as ineffective, recognises the value of the aesthetic of estrangement of sensation, termed "inspiration" by Calas, and "paranoia" by Dali, in the following passage:

Estrangement or "alienation" of sensation, however, is a clear concept and an important one. It means a startling juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous images, a deliberate defiance of familiar or logical associations; and in this practice, I believe, lies the chief contribution of the surrealists. It links them with the long tradition of the grotesque, the recurrent horse-laugh at propriety and pretentiousness. It leads to the strategy that Kenneth Burke calls "perspective by incongruity," which is the method not only of paradox and epigram but of all revolutionary thought and all highly original art. It is in general a way of seeing around corners, getting outside of rigid, conventional attitudes that blunt our perceptions as well as limit our conceptions. In this way the surrealists can freshen language, enliven consciousness, establish significant new relations in felt experience. Yet estrangement of sensation is not properly an end in itself. It is a means to further associations, and these in turn need to be viewed in perspective.⁴⁰

Susan Sontag, in the light of recent dramatic developments in America and Europe, termed "Happenings", discovers much the same contribution made by the surrealist tradition, which she feels is a tradition which cuts across all the arts in the twentieth century, a "mode of sensibility" which, she says,

in all these arts is united by the idea of destroying conventional meanings, and creating new meanings or counter meanings through radical juxtaposition (the "collage principle") . . . Art so understood is

obviously animated by aggression, aggression towards the presumed conventionality of its audience, and above all aggression towards the medium itself. The surrealist sensibility aims to shock, through its techniques of radical juxtaposition. . . . One may also see a kind of involuntary collage-principle in many of the artifacts of the modern city: the brutal disharmony of the buildings in size and style, the wild juxtaposition of store signs, the clamorous layout of the modern newspaper, etc.⁴¹

As Susan Sontag points out, the technique of radical juxtaposition can serve the purpose of wit, in the form of delicious jokes, or social satire. The surrealist use of materials, of shock tactics to involve and abuse their audience has its parallel in the contemporary Happening and perhaps also in the forms of guerrilla and street theatre performed now in the United States in protest against considered social evils, including the Vietnam war. However, the avant-garde of the twenties, including Dada which gave life to surrealism, did not take itself as seriously as its modern counterpart, which the following account of a Dada Happening in Paris, 1920, shows:

. . . a Dada matinee was organised at a hall called the Palais des Fetes. To open the performance, poems were read. Jean Cocteau read a few poems by Max Jacob, though neither of them were really Dadaists. The public feeling sure that there was something outrageously "modern" but "clever" you know, all the same, was inclined to be admiring. Then Breton brought on to the platform a blackboard on which Picabia had drawn some kind of machine, and immediately proceeded to rub the picture off with a cloth. He then produced a picture by Marcel Duchamp, which was nothing more or less than a large printed reproduction of the Mona Lisa with a handsome pair of moustaches painted onto her face, and bearing underneath the inscription: LHOOQ [when pronounced in French, the letters form a phrase equivalent to 'she has hot pants']. . . . By this time the public was beginning to get rather annoyed, and when Tzara, having announced a Dada manifesto began to read a newspaper article to the accompaniment of the ringing of electric bells, the performance came to an end amidst general uproar and scandal.⁴²

The flourishing of poster art in the last decade is a development of this kind of humorous insulting treatment of established 'masterpieces'. We can now buy various mocking versions of the Mona Lisa, including one which gives her tantalising smile a new meaning, by revealing her right

breast. Mere shock value has become an aesthetic value in the art of today, and of it Marcel Duchamp writes:

This Neo-Dada, which they call New Realism, Pop Art, Assemblage, etc., is an easy way out, and lives on what Dada did. When I discovered ready-mades I thought to discourage aesthetics. In Neo-Dada they have taken my ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty.⁴³

This is art of the moment, which depends on surprise or shock for its effect, and is therefore unrepeatable. Perhaps this is an inevitable development in a world which has become even more lunatic than it was when Duchamp first placed his urinal in an art gallery and titled it Fountain. Fatalism, rejection of life, and a loss of faith in 'ideas' and 'values' which are obviously incapable of altering a hopeless situation, or of changing human nature are characteristic of Neo-Dada. However, humanity can still assert itself, as seen in some of the Happenings, which become total works of art. That perhaps something can be created from the anti-art tradition is seen from Richter's following description of one of Alan Kaprow's Happenings, which he saw in New York in the early sixties:

The 'Happening' I went to see took place in the enormous courtyard of a skyscraper, the Mills Hotel in the Village. This is the biggest 'flophouse' in the world, with twelve hundred little rooms for the poorest of the poor, who still have to pay 50 cents a night. In the middle of this courtyard, this immense chasm, Alan Kaprow and his assistants had built a high scaffold about five stories high, covered with black paper, cardboard and sacks. Two ladders gave access to the platform on top. High in the air, many floors above this scaffold, hung an immense dome, also covered in black.

About two hundred spectators lined the walls of this dream-prison. Hundreds looked down at us from little barred windows hardly a foot and a half across. Then we were issued with brooms and the 'audience' began to sweep the ground, which was covered with newspapers and other litter. When all was clean, black charred scraps of paper showered down out of the sky to the accompaniment of wailing sirens and someone blowing a trumpet. More paper rained down, empty sacks and cardboard boxes began to fall out of the night sky. . . and we noticed a cyclist who was very slowly riding round and round the giant scaffold,

and who continued to do so all evening. . . . An Ophelia in white began to dance, with a transistor radio held to her ear, round the scaffold that now looked like a sacrificial altar. After several circuits she climbed up the ladder (she had pretty legs) to the platform five stories up. Fearful noise of sirens. She was immediately followed by two photographers, who climbed up the two ladders after her. Half way up, one of them lost his camera and had to go back and fetch it. Up above, Ophelia was photographed in provocative poses; only her legs were visible from below. Deluges of paper, thunder-effects, howlings and screechings, and the dome began to sink slowly until it had covered Ophelia, photographers, cardboard boxes and motor-tyre. The sacrifice was at an end.

A Ritual! It was a composition using space, colour and movement, and the setting in which the Happening took place gave it a nightmarish obsessive quality, although 'the meaning' of the 'action' was more or less non-existent. This combination of acting, dramatic arrangement, colour and sound recalled the Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art). . . . It required the collaboration of the public.⁴⁴

The cry of the Dadaists and surrealists that art should be made by all, not by one, has possibly been re-realised in the Happening, which almost depends for its success on audience participation; participation in a ritual which may exorcise our current demon, the feeling of nothingness.

The metaphysical shudder

The Grave's a fine and private place
But none I think do there embrace.

— Andrew Marvell

The reaction of some critics to surrealist art is not unlike that of Dr. Johnson to the "Metaphysical" poets: the surrealists also have been accused of being merely novel, wishing to shock and astonish, casting aside aesthetic values.⁴⁵ What such critics fail to realise is that art is for the surrealists only part of the totality of life, a means of externalising particular visions, in an attempt to uncover the surreal.

Dr. Johnson's criticism of the Metaphysicals, and his description of their type of wit, sounds uncannily like the surrealist explanations of the force of images composed of unlike realities, and their dictums to seek the marvelous in every aspect of life:

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they (the Metaphysicals) have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.⁴⁶

However, even Dr. Johnson must concede a grudging admiration for the conceits of these poets, for they "sometimes struck out unexpected truth," through their unconventional methods. One senses in Donne and his followers a search for expression of a personal vision, a means to reveal the supernatural side of existence, not completely unlike the surrealists' search for the surreal, though of course the latter are operating outside any kind of Christian context. It is perhaps not surprising that Donne has been revived in our modern context: the discoveries of Freud have given us our own peculiar consciousness of the "invisible worm" within the bud, of the whole mysterious layer of the subconscious, so deliberately ransacked by the surrealist poets and painters. T. S. Eliot has expressed the charnel-house mood of Webster and Donne, in the following poem:

Webster was much possessed by death
And he saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures under ground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another
 Who found no substitute for sense;
 To seize and clutch and penetrate,
 Expert beyond experience.

He knew the anguish of the marrow
 The ague of the skeleton;
 No contact possible to flesh⁴⁷
 Allayed the fever of the bone.

This poem perhaps expresses better than any prose explanation, the sense of death in life which occupied Donne, the Metaphysical shudder, as it has been termed by George Williamson, who employs it to describe poetry like that of Donne's which uses the condensed conceit; this technique employs a startling use of imaginative distance, a development by the rapid association of thought and image which requires agility of mind for its comprehension.⁴⁸ This technique, in association with the sense of "the skull beneath the skin," gives us the Metaphysical shudder; the simple becomes strange, even terrible, with a strong suggestion of horror, as in Donne's famous line "a bracelet of bright hair about the bone," referring to his outward soul in death. The surrealists may be seen as trying to recapture what Williamson terms "sensuous thought"; the poetic process whereby images form the meaning, rather than being separated from the meaning. Passion blends with thought in the poetry of Donne; one of the most quoted examples of this blend is his drawn out comparison of lovers to "stiff twin compasses." One might imagine that had Donne been a painter the double quality of this conceit might have produced something very like a surrealist painting; indeed the alliance of mechanism and desire appears in Marcel Duchamp's remarkable painting The Bride (1912),⁴⁹ which consists of a huge, intricate, yet unescapably sensuous motor.

Although the surrealist methods of poetic creation have a

different base from those of the Metaphysicals, and indeed from most other poets, still one gets something of the same imaginative surprise and shudder from a surrealist poem, such as the following of Benjamin Peret:

The wind rises like a woman after a night of love.
It adjusts its binoculars and looks at
the world with the eyes of a child. The world
this morning is like a green apple, which will never
ripen, the world is acid and gay.⁵⁰

The simile as litany

The seasons like the interior of
an apple from which a slice has
been cut out.

— Breton

The simile, or in this case perhaps dis-simile, which we are generally accustomed to think of as the poor relative of literary style, the mark of a naive mind, was renovated, rejuvenated by surrealist poets, to form what is really a new metaphor, not based on analogy, but on divergence and contradiction; thus creating paradoxically, a new analogy. Linguistic innovations are of course a basic function of the ars poetica; every era has its legacy of 'poetic' language, which contemporary poets seek to refresh and revitalise. In the course of this revamping, echoes occur: incantatory poems, letter poems, concrete poems, revival of ancient rhythms and forms, are all familiar to the poetry dabbler of the 1960's. However, many of these 'new' forms can be found in the artistic explosions of Dada and surrealism in the first few decades of this century, and others, of course, go back to biblical and early language

traditions. Wordsworth sincerely believed that his poetry and Coleridge's attempted to attack the outworn conventions of poetic language:

There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. . . I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.⁵¹

For the surrealists, poetry was not merely a matter of correcting "bad poets," but the base of human expression in all its forms. André Breton states this position quite explicitly in his Second Manifesto:

Whoever speaks of expression speaks of language first and foremost. It should therefore come as no surprise to anyone to see surrealism almost exclusively concerned with the question of language at first, nor should it surprise anyone to see it return to language, after some foray into another area. . . . The hordes of words which, whatever one may say, Dada and surrealism set about to let loose as though opening Pandora's box, are not of a kind to withdraw. . . . People pretend not to pay too much attention to the fact that the logical mechanism of the sentence alone reveals itself to be increasingly powerless to provoke the emotive shock in man which really makes his life meaningful.⁵²

If not the sentence, then, the power of the image must administer the voltage, the emotive shock. In the composition of the poem, what is even more important than the right word, is the marriage of words into illuminating associations which become the basic structure of the poetic image. The word "like" and other conjunctions usually used for simple comparison, take on a new function: the surrealist associates with these words, what we normally disassociate. The connections are psychic and consequential rather than rational. The metaphor does not convey the preconceived image, but creates an even more extraordinary image; the terms are not chosen on the basis of similarity, but on difference in

potential, increasing verbal voltage. The effect is one of absurdity and surprise, the same type of effect created by surrealist painters, with the chance meeting of two objects. As Dali placed a telephone and an omelette in the same perspective, in one of his paintings, so Breton juxtaposes the physical characteristics of his beloved with non-romantic images in a series of striking analogies, in the following poem:

My wife with the hair of a wood fire
 With the thoughts of heat lightning
 With the waist of an hourglass
 With the waist of an otter in the teeth of a tiger
 My wife with the lips of a cockade and of a bunch
 of stars of the last magnitude
 With the teeth of tracks of white mice on the white
 earth
 With the tongue of rubbed amber and glass
 My wife with the tongue of a stabbed host
 With the tongue of a doll that opens and closes
 its eyes
 With the tongue of an unbelievable stone
 My wife with the eyelashes of strokes of a child's
 writing
 With brows of the edge of a swallow's nest
 My wife with the brow of slates of a hothouse roof
 And of steam on the panes
 My wife with shoulders of champagne
 And of a fountain with dolphin-heads beneath the ice
 My wife with wrists of matches
 My wife with fingers of luck and ace of hearts
 With fingers of mown hay
 My wife with armpits of marten and of beechnut
 And of Midsummer Night
 Of privet and of an angelfish nest
 With arms of seafoam and of riverlocks
 And of a mingling of the wheat and the mill
 My wife with legs of flares
 With the movements of clockwork and despair

 My wife with buttocks of sandstone and asbestos
 My wife with buttocks of swans' backs
 My wife with buttocks of spring
 With the sex of an iris
 My wife with the sex of a mining-placer and of a
 platypus
 My wife with a sex of seaweed and ancient sweetmeat
 My wife with a sex of mirror
 My wife with eyes full of tears
 With eyes of purple panoply and of a magnetic needle

My wife with savanna eyes
 My wife with eyes of water to be drunk in prison
 My wife with eyes of wood always under the axe
 My wife with eyes of water-level of level of air
 earth and fire.⁵³

These images give the trance-like atmosphere of a mass, an incantation somewhat reminiscent of the Song of Solomon. They also reveal an incredible fertility of imagination, stimulated by free association.

Breton felt that these types of images were quite unpremeditated, and that this gave them their surrealist character. In explaining the force of several of Pierre Reverdy's images, notably, "day unfolded like a white tablecloth" (which has its English parallel in T. S. Eliot's famous comparison of evening to a "patient etherised upon a table") Breton claims that the reasoning mind has no part in the creation of such images:

It is, as it were, from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms that a particular light has sprung, the light of the image, to which we are infinitely sensitive. The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors. When the difference exists only slightly, as in a comparison, the spark is lacking. . . the two terms of the image are not deduced one from the other by the mind for the specific purpose of producing the spark, that they are the simultaneous products of the activity I call surrealist, reason's role being limited to taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon.⁵⁴

The characteristic surrealist activity which was most conducive to producing these images was the practice of automatic writing. Breton gave classifications for surrealist imagery, and Anna Balakian⁵⁵ has unearthed some of the more startling examples of the categories which abound in surrealist work:

1. Contradictions.

One form of this is the combination of two adjectives originally incompatible in meaning:

I love you on the surface of seas
 Red like the egg when it is green. (Breton: Tiki)

2. One of the terms of the image is hidden.

Paul Eluard's The Public Rose contains a series of incomplete images:

All along the walls furnished with decrepit orchestras
 Darting their leaden ears toward the light
 On guard for a caress mingled with the thunderbolt

3. The image starts out sensationallly, then abruptly closes the angle of its compass, thereby ending weakly.

My dreams will be sure and vain like the noise
 of eyelids of water in the shadow. (Breton: The Dead Rose)

4. The image is hallucinatory, as in Tristan Tzara's poem, Approximative Man:

For stony in my garments of schist I have dedicated
 my awaiting
 to the torment of the oxydised desert
 and to the robust advent of the fire

5. The image lends to the abstract the mask of the concrete. These abound in surrealist painting and poetry, the simplest example being of eternity or time contained in a wristwatch or clock. Phillippe Soupault concretises the junction of dream and reality in his poem To go There:

Sound of slumber
 bee and night
 the beauteous familiar things in the corner
 said goodbye
 for ever and until tomorrow
 with the despair of the finite and infinite
 which touch each other
 like hands unaware of each other

(This concretisation of the abstract is not of course confined to surrealist poetry: one has only to think of Donne, or E. E. Cummings, to name but two.)

6. The image implies the negation of some elementary physical property.

In Breton's poetry you might hear the sound of wet street lamps, or find him wishing for the sun to come out at night.

7. The final classification includes all images that provoke laughter.

One of the most delightful examples of this is from Benjamin Peret's poem, Long Live the Revolution:

He was beautiful like fresh glass
 Beautiful like the smoke from his pipe
 Beautiful like the ears of a donkey that brays
 Beautiful like a chimney
 Which falls on the head of a policeman

In all the above classifications, the examples quoted do not convey a sense of the reproduction of the subject, but rather the force, the quality of it. What essentially separates the surrealist mode from the poetry of preceding generations is not its break and emancipation from metrical form, nor does the difference lie in a disregard for grammatical structure. As Anna Balakian puts it:

It is rather in the use of words: an enrichment of the active vocabulary of poetry, a release from verbal inhibitions, a selection of word association beyond the barriers set up by logic, a new metaphor built upon these incongruous word groupings, and the images resulting from the association of one metaphor with another—which one might call the square of the metaphor. Finally, these images are cast into grammatically accurate sentences connected primarily on the basis of sensual synchronization. . . Poetry was discovered to be a different type of intellectual activity [from prose] consisting of what one might call mental deviation and linguistic alchemy.⁵⁶

Language was thus for the surrealists the "prime matter" of alchemy, the chaos out of which the key might be found to the ultimate synthesis between conscious and unconscious: for they believed (and Jungian psychology would seem to support their belief) that these two states of human awareness were inextricably intertwined, were indeed, one, rather than there being a one-way feedback, conscious to unconscious.

Antonin Artaud: the dark angel of surrealism

One of the chief reasons perhaps for some of the negative feeling towards surrealism outside France, is the incredible, agonised life and writings of Artaud, a one-time surrealist. Unfortunately his work, in particular The Theatre and Its Double, has been so widely translated and disseminated, and misinterpreted, that it has been identified with surrealism. Artaud was what Anna Balakian has termed "the dark angel of surrealism";⁵⁷ he expressed better than any the initial mood of pessimism and disgust which characterised the group in the post-war years of disillusionment. The more authentic surrealist writings became available too little and too late (Breton's Manifestoes were not translated into English until the 1960's) to show the creative, more optimistic side of the movement, which counters Artaud's uncontrolled and apocryphal brand of surrealism, possibly more a function of the man than the movement. Although at one time director of the Office of Surrealist Research, Artaud broke with the surrealists, pouring upon them his characteristic vitriol:

All those who have landmarks in their minds, I mean in a certain part of their heads, in well-defined sites in their skulls, all those who are masters of language, all those for whom words have meaning, all those for whom the soul has its heights and thought, its currents, those who are the spirits of the times, and who have given their names to these currents of thought—I am thinking of their specific tasks, and of that mechanical creaking their minds produce at every gust of wind—are rubbish mongers.⁵⁸

Much of The Theatre and Its Double, however, reveals a positive hope for the future of the theatre, a return to mythic and spectacular forms of drama, but Artaud takes his position essentially from a total destruction of what he regards as the putrefaction of all existing literature, tradition and Western civilization itself.

People are stupid. Literature empty. There is nothing more and nobody left, the soul is insane, there is no more love, nor even any hatred left, all the bodies satiated, conscience resigned. There is not even any anxiety left, which has vanished into the emptiness of bones.⁵⁹

In a letter from the insane asylum Artaud writes:

I believe however that our present social state is iniquitous and should be destroyed. If this is a fact for theatre to be pre-occupied with, it is even more a matter for machine guns. Our theatre is not even capable of asking the question in the burning and effective way it must be asked, but even if it should ask this question it would still be far from its purpose, which is for me a higher and more secret one.

All the preoccupations enumerated above stink unbelievably of man, provisional, material man, I shall even say carriage man. Such preoccupations with personal problems disgusts me, and disgusts me all the more with nearly the whole of contemporary theatre which, as human as it is antipoetic, except for three or four plays, seems to me to stink of decadence and pus.⁶⁰

Artaud committed suicide in 1948, two years after his release from a mental hospital, in which he had been confined for nine years. The antithesis of poor Artuad's torment is exemplified in the attitude of Breton, who, when asked in an interview in 1946, whether he agreed with Camus that the modern Sisyphus must roll his stone, replied that there was no reason why one should put greater confidence in the durability of the rock than in man's potential power to destroy it, and thereby overcome the absurdity of the task.⁶¹ Breton was a flower child of the twenties; the way out of the modern dilemma was for him through love, love between man and woman, man and man, and man and nature. He has written:

Love, reciprocal and total, which nothing can spoil, which makes flesh turn into sun and a splendid imprint on flesh that is an ever singing source, inalterable and always alive, and whose water runs its path between the sunflower and the thyme.⁶²

Breton was perhaps an earlier prophet of the Age of Aquarius, for the healing power of love, evidenced in his writings over the years, was, and apparently remained, for him something fresher than the popular

poetic cliché of today's flower-bearing youth. Certainly, if Artaud can be characterised as the dark angel of surrealism, Breton might be termed the archangel of the movement.

Artaud's alchemical theatre

Imagination is the star in man,
the celestial or supercelestial
body.

— the alchemist Ruland

Jung's book Psychology and Alchemy, while being a fascinating study of alchemy itself, advances the theory of the essentially psychic nature of the alchemist's experiences.

The alchemy of the classical epoch (from antiquity to about the middle of the seventeenth century) was, in essence, chemical research work into which there entered, by way of projection, an admixture of unconscious psychic material. For this reason the psychological conditions necessary for the work are frequently stressed in the texts. The contents under consideration were those that lent themselves to projection upon the unknown chemical substance. Owing to the impersonal, purely objective nature of matter, it was the impersonal, collective archetypes that were projects: first and foremost, as a parallel to the collective spiritual life of the times, the image of the spirit imprisoned in the darkness of the world. In other words, the state of relative unconsciousness in which man found himself, and which he felt to be painful and in need of redemption, was reflected in matter and accordingly dealt with in matter.⁶³

Unlike Christian philosophy, alchemy was concerned to redeem, not the Son of God, but the god who is lost and sleeping in matter. Hence the dignifying of the most commonplace and grossest matter, in the search for the precious substance, the "philosopher's stone." Jung's interest in alchemy stems from his observation that the dreams of many of his patients had an uncanny recurring similarity to the compelling, dream-like symbolism of the alchemist pictures and illustrations. As Aniela Jaffé has noted, the concept of a "spirit in matter" can be interpreted

psychologically as the unconscious, and she asserts that it "always manifests itself when conscious or rational knowledge has reached its limits and mystery sets in, for man tends to fill the inexplicable and mysterious with the contents of his unconscious."⁶⁴ Hence the surrealist revival of this aspect of alchemy, a continuation of the elevation of object into something magic and animate. Kurt Schwitters, the German artist, made imaginative collages from the contents of his rubbish bin.

Breton felt that alchemy, like surrealist poetry, allowed man's imagination to change his entire condition, to affect not only the material universe, but also the universe of the mind.

I would appreciate your noting the remarkable analogy, insofar as their goals are concerned, between the surrealist efforts and those of the alchemists; the philosopher's stone is nothing more or less than that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things, which brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination. . .⁶⁵

Breton goes on to compare the surrealist painting with the fantastic descriptions of the fourteenth century French alchemist, Flamel.

So in the outward processes of alchemy, what we are looking at is really a shadow, or double, of an interior process, and it is in this light that Artaud's theatre of cruelty, of violence may be understood. Violent spectacle symbolically reflects the reality of our inward torture; Jung has attributed the two world wars of this century to man in a state of unconscious possession, regression of consciousness into the unconscious in man who has ceased to project the darkness of the unconscious onto the outside world, as did the alchemists, and also primitive societies. Artaud sees a correspondence between his theatre and alchemy, a correspondence deeper than the analogy between the

spiritual and physical levels, both of which aim to turn matter into gold.

Where alchemy, through its symbols, is the spiritual Double of an operation which functions only on the level of real matter, the theatre must also be reconsidered as the Double, not of this direct, everyday reality of which it is gradually being reduced to a mere inert replica—as empty as it is sugar-coated—but of another archetypal and dangerous reality, a reality of which the Principles, like dolphins, once they have shown their heads, hurry to dive back into the obscurity of the deep.

.
The theatrical operation of making gold, by the immensity of the conflicts it provokes, by the prodigious number of forces it throws one against the other and rouses, by this appeal to a sort of essential redistillation brimming with consequences and surcharged with spirituality, ultimately evokes in the spirit an absolute and abstract purity, beyond which there can be nothing, and which can be conceived as a unique sound, defining note, caught on the wing, the organic part of an indescribable vibration.⁶⁶

Artaud was quite concerned to explain what he meant by "cruelty", a term which caused adverse criticism when he first used it. For him cruelty was not to be employed in the theatre out of a "taste for sadism and perversion of mind"⁶⁷ but rather in the sense of a

pure and detached feeling, a veritable movement of the mind based on the gestures of life itself; the idea being that life, metaphysically speaking, because it admits extension, thickness, heaviness and matter, admits, as a direct consequence, evil and all that is inherent in evil, space, extension and matter. . .

I have therefore said "cruelty" as I might have said "life" or "necessity", because I want to indicate especially that for me the theatre is act and perpetual emanation, that there is nothing congealed about it, that I turn it into a true act, hence living, hence magical.⁶⁸

Thus cruelty for Artaud was synonymous with action as the demonstration of necessity.

Artaud: not a wordless theatre but a
return to the origins of words

Artaud did not leave behind him a large number of plays which might exemplify his theories, apart from a production in 1935 of his own play Les Cenci; he also helped found the Alfred Jarry Theatre, and produced several plays by authors other than himself, between 1927 and 1929.⁶⁹ It is in his dramatic theories that his contribution lies, as most critics agree. Artaud felt that language, and more especially theatrical language was withered, and removed from the true reality of human existence.

If confusion is the sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation.⁷⁰

A dramatist such as Ionesco might express "the tragedy of language" by deliberately exploring its living shroud, its inadequacy, with parody of cliché, slogan and logic, as he has done in The Bald Soprano. Artaud looked for a return to the language of sound, light and gesture: if signs and symbols have failed us, for this is what language is, let's return to their roots. Artaud felt that even the other dramatic effects he saw in contemporary theatre were subordinates to the written text.

The idea of the supremacy of speech in the theatre is so deeply rooted in us, and the theatre seems to such a degree merely the material reflection of the text, that everything in the theatre that exceeds this text, that is not kept within its limits and strictly conditioned by it, seems to us purely a matter of mise en scène, and quite inferior in comparison with the text.

Presented with this subordination of theatre to speech, one might indeed wonder whether the theatre by any chance possesses its own language, whether it is entirely fanciful to consider it as an independent and autonomous art, of the same rank as music, painting, dance, etc. . . .⁷¹

J. Chiari, in his book, Landmarks of Contemporary Drama, criti-

cises Artaud for believing that "gestures, mimicry, movements and music"⁷² can take the place of words. However, Chiari has confused Artaud's position: it was not a question of replacing words, but giving them a different role in the theatre.

It is not a matter of suppressing speech in the theatre but of changing its role, and especially of reducing its position, of considering it as something else than a means of conducting human characters to their external ends, since the theatre is concerned only with the way feelings and passions conflict with one another, and man with man, in life.

To change the role of speech in theatre is to make use of it in a concrete and spatial sense, combining it with everything in the theatre that is spatial and significant in the concrete domain.⁷³

Theatre must thus not be subjugated to the text, and hence for Artaud, the director becomes something more than a mere translator for the author; he becomes a creator with the immediate and physical language of what Artaud terms the "pure mise en scène." Words can then play a much nobler, almost hallucinatory part in the drama.

But let there be the least return to the active, plastic, respiratory sources of language, let words be joined again to the physical notions that gave them birth, and let the discursive, logical aspect of speech disappear beneath its affective, physical side, i.e., let words be heard in their sonority rather than be exclusively taken for what they mean grammatically, let them be perceived as movements, and let these movements themselves turn into other simple, direct movements as occurs in the circumstances of life, but not sufficiently with actors on the stage, and behold! the language of literature is reconstituted, revived, and furthermore—as in the canvasses of certain painters of the past—objects themselves begin to speak. Light, instead of decorating, assumes the qualities of an actual language, and the stage effects, all humming with significations, take on an order, reveal patterns.⁷⁴

Michael Kirby, in his book Happenings, sees the translation into English in 1958 of Artaud's dramatic theories as an important influence on the form of the Happening.⁷⁵ Although the spectacle Artaud prescribes in The Theatre and Its Double, is not a Happening, according to Kirby, the general text of Artaud's book is almost a guide for Happenings. The rejection of speech as supreme, the creation of pure

theatrical language, the sort of sensory theatre which would involve and assault the audience, are all elements which combine in some Happenings to make them, says Kirby, the best examples yet produced of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. The kinds of things Claes Oldenburg, Alan Kaprow and others were doing in New York in the early sixties, might almost be the fulfillment of some of the principles Artaud laid down in his first manifesto of The Theatre of Cruelty, where he recommended holding plays in hangars or barns, with the public in the middle of the action, no written text, the use of any and every sound or object and the concrete representation of idea by the performer, rather than the traditional interpretative 'performance' by an actor.⁷⁶ Because of the 'instant' nature of happenings, few preliminary outlines of them exist, although Kirby is anxious to point out they are by no means completely spontaneous phenomena, but are planned in advance. Kirby offers this definition of the Happening:

. . . a purposefully composed form of theatre in which diverse alogical elements, including nonmatrixed performing, are organised in a compartmented structure.⁷⁷

Some authors of Happenings have terse outlines of them, but the chief written link with them is the description of one as it 'happens'; the eventual performance is only related in a minimal way to such scripts as do exist. Hence Happenings are not a literary form, and unlike most plays, cannot be studied apart from performance; indeed Happenings may vary from performance to performance, and once dismantled, are never performed again. In its use of materials, including persons as materials, the Happening restates the banal, the commonplace; it explores an environment, with its 'collage'-like technique. McLuhan and Watson have noted that such a development is natural in a world which has be-

come a unified collage by virtue of speedy information services, and see the Happening as a form which

exploits not only the clash of one cliché against another, but also the much more effective interface of a cliché from one medium with clichés from other media.⁷⁸

Since Artaud foresaw a more creative role for the director in his theatre, it is hardly surprising that his writings have had some influence in this area, notably in the work of the English director, Peter Brook, whose production of Peter Weiss' play Marat/Sade, was greeted with mixed reactions. Susan Sontag, who is unreserved in her admiration, both for the play and its staging, feels that it, more than any other work in the modern theatre, comes near the scope and the intent of Artaud's conception of the theatre. Inasmuch as we regard the theatre as a branch of literature—and it was exactly this form of prejudice that Artaud was trying to destroy—Marat/Sade may disappoint, since it demands to be experienced on a sensory level as well, with its singing, acting-out band of inmates, who stage a mass guillotine scene, and with its slow-motion staging of Marat's murder. Of the scene where Sade has Charlotte Corday whip him, Sontag says:

The purpose of this scene is surely not to inform the audience that, as one critic put it, Sade is "sick, sick, sick". . . By combining rational or near-rational argument with irrational behavior [for Sade is engaging in rational discourse during the whipping], Weiss is not inviting the audience to make a judgement on Sade's character, mental competence, or state of mind. Rather, he is shifting to a kind of theatre focused not on characters, but on intense trans-personal emotions borne by characters. He is provoking a kind of vicarious emotional experience (in this case, frankly erotic) from which the theatre has shied away too long.⁷⁹

Sontag also sees Weiss' play as a synthesis of Brecht and Artaud: Weiss himself apparently stated that this was his ambition in the play, and to a large extent he has succeeded: Artaud's theatre of gesture and

cruelty is combined with Brecht's theatre of intelligence.

The painting and the play

Only on the analogical plane have I ever experienced any intellectual pleasure. For me the only real evidence is a result of the the spontaneous, extra-lucid and defiant relationship suddenly sensed between two things which common sense would never bring together.

— André Breton

These two forms of art can be related by analogy, if we dare to step out of compartmentalised thought, and cast the timidities of literary criticism aside. The idea after all is not new; Emerson devotes his book Nature to the beauties of analogical thought, and although he is imbued with the "Great Spirit," and a romantic sense of nature's resilience which we may have come to doubt, his thoughts on analogy within the arts are to the point:

Not only resemblances exist in things whose analogy is obvious, as when we detect the type of the human hand in the flipper of the fossil saurus, but also in objects wherein there is great superficial unlikeness. Thus architecture is call 'frozen music' by De Stael and Goethe. 'A Gothic church,' says Coleridge, 'is a petrified religion.' Michelangelo maintained, that, to an architect a knowledge of anatomy is essential. In Hayden's oratorios, the notes present to the imagination not only motions, as of the snake, the stag, and the elephant, but colors also; as the green grass.⁸⁰

Following this analogical thought further, we can see that, for example, drama might be related quite easily to music; the well-made play with the compact construction of the minuet. More particular facets of structure might also be related, such as the recurring, every growing motifs of a symphony, and the prolific herd of rhinoceros in Ionesco's play, or his linguistic crescendoes for several voices.

The conventional stage frames its material in much the same way as the picture-frame encloses a painting, and the technicalities of the stage, lighting, use of space and setting, perhaps made this medium more akin to the plastic arts than any other. Even more recent developments in the theatre, such as the Happening, with its expansion out of the picture-frame, can be related to artistic techniques, such as collage. The painting and the play can also be compared in terms of the 'atmospheric pressure' they engender. The terror of the growing corpse in Ionesco's Amedée, resembles the 'something nasty in the woodshed' atmosphere of Jerome Bosche's alarmingly normal, yet sinister tableaux. Laying aside for the moment the philosophical and artistic intentions of surrealism, and examining only the plastic products, we shall see that the atmosphere created by Dali's dark fantasies on canvas, or by Magritte's astonishingly juxtaposed commonplaces, is similar to the logical, almost banal construction of nightmare in the absurdist theatre—the sense of underlying horror, of objects that have a life of their own, in Pinter's Dumb Waiter, for example, or his hulk of a matchseller in A Slight Ache, who functions as a sinister person-object. In the painting the moment of horror is frozen, in the play the moment becomes a continuing presence which gnaws at us throughout.



René Magritte: The Threatened Assassin (1926 or 1927)

(from Sylvester, Magritte, 111)

CHAPTER II

PINTER AND SURREALISM

The Stage as an environment for the transformation of the real

We have seen how the Dadaist and surrealist painters transformed the real, the commonplace with their distortion of objects, dual images, and creation of new objects. The act of nailing a coathanger to the floor liberates that coathanger from its utilitarian environment, creating a 'surrealist' object. Isolating the banal, the everyday in existence can be a dizzying process, as Ionesco relates in his Notes and Counter Notes:

However, the text of The Bald Soprano only started off as a lesson (and a plagiarism). An extraordinary phenomenon took place, I know not how: before my very eyes the text underwent a subtle transformation, against my will. After a time, those inspired yet simple sentences which I had so painstakingly copied into my schoolboy's exercise book, detached themselves from the pages on which they had been written, became garbled and corrupted. Although I had copied them down so carefully, so correctly, one after the other, the lines of dialogue in the manual had got out of hand. It happened to dependable and undeniable truths such as "the floor is below us, the ceiling above us". . . . Other alarming things happened: the Smiths told us of the death of a certain Bobby Watson, impossible to identify, because they also told us that three-quarters of the inhabitants of the town, men, women, children, cats and ideologists were all called Bobby Watson. . . . the wise and elementary truths they exchanged, when strung together, had gone mad, the language had become disjointed, the characters distorted; words now absurd, had been emptied of their content and it all ended with a quarrel the cause of which it was impossible to discover, for my heroes and heroines hurled into one another's faces not lines of dialogue, but even scraps of sentences, not words, but syllables or consonants or vowels! For me what had happened was a kind of collapse of reality. The words had turned into sounding shells devoid of meaning; the characters, too, of

course, had been emptied of psychology and the world appeared to me in an unearthly, perhaps its true, light beyond understanding and governed by arbitrary laws. . . . I imagined I had written something like the tragedy of language.¹

Of course, audiences did not see The Bald Soprano as a tragedy, it was rather a sustained joke; the exposure, in parodied form, of our own banality, abstracted from its customary environment, is hilarious, because not to laugh, would be to recognise ourselves too closely in the Smiths and Martins, those interchangeable robots. Ionesco has put his finger on this kind of 'comedy' in the following remarks:

The Bald Soprano is the only one of my plays the critics consider to be "purely comic." And yet there again the comic seems to me to be an expression of the unusual. But in my view the unusual can spring only from the dullest and most ordinary daily routine and from our everyday prose, when pursued beyond their limits. To feel the absurdity of improbability of everyday life and language is already to have transcended it; in order to transcend it, you must first saturate yourself in it. The comic is the unusual pure and simple; nothing surprises me more than banality; the "surreal" is there, within our reach, in our daily conversation.²

This is why listening to tapes of random conversation, recorded without the knowledge of the participants, holds such a fascination for most of us. When we isolate everyday chatter, frame it, as it were through the mechanism of the tape-recorder, or the stage, it suddenly becomes mysterious, crammed with half-finished sentences, mindless repetitions, and inexplicable motivations. Normally this strange collage of conversation and/or communication passes unnoticed: we live from sentence to sentence, and also, as James R. Hollis would have it, in the space between words:

Perhaps man has always lived in the space between words, for it is the mysterious conspiracy between language and man which gives rise to the conception and embodiment of meaning. The motive of meaning is found precisely in man's impulse to overcome through language the apparent barrier between the outer and inner environments which he inhabits. When this chasm is spanned, outer and inner become synonymous. . . . The artist thus ministers to his culture when he fashions bridges. . . .

between outer and inner. An artist like Harold Pinter, for example, renders meaningful the awesome silences of this our space between words precisely by his metaphors of silence.³

It is the fashion nowadays to term 'Pinteresque' the inane kinds of conversations we all overhear in buses and subways, restaurants, and even elevators, if one is lucky enough to find a 'liberated' elevator. However, Pinter did not invent these conversations, he merely transferred them to the stage: he re-located everyday dialogue, changing its frame, or rather, framing it for us, and thereby re-charging it with mystery, and revealing its basic absurdity. Combined with the situation of threat of some kind, which is a characteristic situation for Pinter, the seemingly ordinary, innocuous dialogue takes on the dimension of vague menace, almost like a series of ambiguous linguistic clues in a Hitchcock film; as in the following passage from The Room:

ROSE: Well, it's a shame you have to go out in this weather
Mr. Kidd. Don't you have a help?

MR. KIDD: Eh?

ROSE: I thought you had a woman to help.

MR. KIDD: I haven't got any woman.

ROSE: I thought you had one when we first came.

MR. KIDD: No women here.

ROSE: Maybe I was thinking of somewhere else.

MR. KIDD: Plenty of women round the corner. Not here though.
Oh no. Eh, have I seen that before?

ROSE: What?

MR. KIDD: That.

ROSE: I don't know. Have you?

MR. KIDD: I seem to have some remembrance.

ROSE: It's just an old rocking-chair.

MR. KIDD: Was it here when you came?

ROSE: No, I brought it myself.

MR. KIDD: I could swear blind I've seen that before.

ROSE: Perhaps you have.

MR. KIDD: What?

ROSE: I say, perhaps you have.

MR. KIDD: Yes, maybe I have.

ROSE: Take a seat, Mr. Kidd.

MR. KIDD: I wouldn't take an oath on it though.⁴

This dialogue, and many other passages in the play, take on a new significance in the light of doubts raised about Rose's identity, and also Mr. Kidd's; it is questionable whether he is really the landlord, and he doesn't appear to know how many floors the house has, whether his mother was a Jewess or not, or whether the house is full of tenants or half-empty. These are not major innuendoes; no crime or murder has yet been committed, and these doubts are not factually relevant to the final killing of the blind Negro; however, they set the stage, albeit a stage-within-a-stage, for the ultimate explosion of banality: a dead body.

Bisociation, humour and Harold Pinter

. . . and I demand that he who still refuses, for instance to see a horse galloping on a tomato should be looked upon as a cretin.

— André Breton

Koestler, in his book The Act of Creation, proposes a theory of bisociation, which he sees as characteristic of creative thought, from

the poet's simile to the work of Einstein. Koestler's study begins with an examination of humour, since bisociation is crucial to most forms of it:

The pattern underlying all varieties of humour is 'bisociative'—perceiving a situation or event in two habitually incompatible associative contexts. This causes an abrupt transfer of the train of thought from one matrix to another governed by a different logic or 'rule of the game'.⁵

It appears that Koestler's bisociation is not much different from what Susan Sontag has termed "radical juxtaposition" and although amongst his many references to art, he does not specifically mention surrealism, this movement, perhaps more than most, was concerned with the confrontation of different matrices; much of surrealist art provokes laughter, especially in its use of the object (for example, Man Ray's clothes iron with a row of nails on the underside or Oppenheim's furlined cup).

The techniques of the humourist, Koestler divides according to three criteria: originality or unexpectedness, emphasis through selection, exaggeration and simplification, and economy or implicitness which demands extrapolation, interpolation and transposition. One form of humour is the juxtaposition of the trivial and the exalted; this can occur in parody. For example, Ionesco directed that certain parts of the farcical dialogue in The Bald Soprano be played in a sincerely tragic style. However, as Koestler points out, the artist may reverse things by dignifying the trivial, and thus creating, not a comic experience, but an aesthetic one. Hence Kurt Schwitters' imaginative use of old tram tickets, newspapers and other 'rubbish'.

In Giorgio de Chirico's painting Song of Love (1914)⁶ we find the matrices of the trivial and the exalted juxtaposed to create an aesthetic response: a red rubber glove (symbol of modern magic?) hangs

next to a sculpted head of a blind Grecian-style god, probably Apollo. In the foreground a green ball seems to unite these crass opposites.

Harold Pinter draws tragedy, or perhaps pathos, from the repetitive stammerings of his characters:

MEG: Wasn't it a lovely party last night?

PETHEY: I wasn't there.

MEG: Weren't you?

PETHEY: I came in afterwards.

MEG: Oh.

Pause

It was a lovely party. I haven't laughed so much for years. We had dancing and singing. And games. You should have been there.

PETHEY: It was good, eh?

Pause

MEG: I was the belle of the ball.

PETHEY: Were you?

MEG: Oh yes. They all said I was.

PETHEY: I bet you were, too.

MEG: Oh, it's true. I was.

Pause

I know I was.

Curtain⁷

In this particular play, The Birthday Party, Pinter juxtaposes farce and melodrama; the initial laconic dialogue between Meg and Petey ultimately becomes no laughing matter. Without this juxtaposition, we would have pure farce, as we have in some of Pinter's short sketches, such as "Last to Go" and "The Black and White." What we have in The

Birthday Party is an irruption of unexplained violence into the texture of banality; the assassins, who are themselves banal (a Jew, a defrocked Irish priest) are ranged beside cornflakes and fried bread.

Seneca, surrealism, theatrical violence,
and The Homecoming

I affirm, without the slightest hesitation, that poetry begins with the transformation of the Parthenon into an arsenal and ends with the blood of Marat spilt by Charlotte Corday.

— Nicolas Calas

The surrealist sensibility is one which desires to absorb violence into art, through revolutionary tactics: the confrontation of incongruities, the unleashing of the unconscious, with its 'sweet dreams' as well as nightmares, and the pursuit of what Breton called "convulsive beauty," through whatever strategy might unearth the violent juxtaposition of opposites to cause a shock, which may often be comic. Awareness of the violent incongruities of unconscious reality leads to an irrational laughter which Breton called "l'humour noir," or black bile. It is a humour connected with the shock of dislocation from the conscious mind's perception of good and evil; of it Calas says:

The aggressiveness of surrealism, like all movements that are in pursuit of definite objects (realizations of desires) must lead to attack. It was Trotsky, the only political thinker of our time, who gave such importance to irony as a method of fighting one's enemies. Surrealism, thanks to the discoveries of Freud, has managed to go very deeply into the process of affective reaction and has discovered that when irony becomes really revolutionary (from the point of view of the poet) it becomes something much more cruel than what is understood when we use the term irony. Breton has called it "l'humour noir," black bile.

It is laughter of the most disagreeable kind and with the most disturbing effects. Charlie Chaplin sometimes laughs this way, Aristophanes too. Bernard Shaw never—how could he? He speaks from a pulpit. We scream from the midst of the iconoclastic mob.⁸

Calas goes on to point out that black bile can be present also in the estrangement of sensation, so that it is not necessarily always a product of the unconscious. Here we are in the area of the 'sick joke', often the result of a violent or cruel image treated unemotionally or rationally, or an image of the traditionally beautiful desecrated; the film Dr. Strangelove is an extended example of the 'sick' treatment of a modern nightmare, the mushroom cloud, and the moustachioed Mona Lisa is a sort of current classic of destructive humour, first created by Marcel Duchamp, the surrealist painter. What could be more surrealist than the mountains of human hair and landslides of false teeth revealed to the public when the Nazi death camps were opened after the second World War?

Violence in art is not, of course, a new thing. The Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres accepted the portrayal of violence on stage as a matter of course. In Marlowe's Tamburlaine, the captured Turkish emperor and empress dash out their brains in full view of the audience, and in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, often cited as a source for Shakespeare's Hamlet, the avenging figure, Hieronimo, bites out his tongue, before littering the stage with his victims: this de-tonguing is the occasion for a 'sick joke', as the other characters in the scene are merely annoyed for practical reasons:

KING: O monstrous resolution of a wretch!
See, Viceroy, he hath bitten forth his tongue,
Rather than to reveal what we requir'd.

CASTILE: Yet can he write.⁹

The Roman dramatist, Seneca, is generally accorded a major influence on Elizabethan drama;¹⁰ however, Seneca's brand of violence is a far cry from the stage atrocities we find in Kyd, or even in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, where the hero cuts off his hand on stage. Seneca's plays were intended for recitation only, and the violent deeds were not performed, but rather reported through the second-hand mechanisms of messenger or chorus. Seneca's Ten Tragedies abound with inventive atrocities: decapitation, human stew, adultery, infanticide, etc., but these events are merely reported, not presented. The substitution of narration for presentation results in a loss of dramatic atmosphere. This is not to say that violence per se is always good theatre. But theatre is an art of exaggeration which suffers castration when it is limited to only an imitation of non-violent life. Violence in the sense of conflict, may be inherent to the dramatic form. With the rise of media, especially television and film, photographic violence is possible, with all its horrifying matter-of-factness, the presentation on stage of battles and murders doesn't work so well any more: if you know that that red stuff is only tomato ketchup, and the dagger is made of rubber, stage murder becomes an embarrassment. Perhaps one solution is for the theatre to frankly admit its artifice and exaggeration; these can be used, of course, symbolically; by presenting episodes as quotation from the theatre, the theatricality of the theatre may be turned to its advantage. Shakespeare does this with his play-within-a-play in Hamlet. Peter Weiss has done it in his Marat/Sade, where Sade is actually placed onstage as the playwright of the spectacle performed by the insane.

Martin Esslin has pointed out the importance of "psychological

violence" in modern theatre; and he makes a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence in the theatre:

If violence is used to heighten your sense of awareness of the world in such a way that the shock that has been administered to you makes you more capable of evaluating the reality of the situation you are in, then this violence has been rightly used and is ethically defensible. If the violence deprives you of your autonomy, forces you to act in ways that you would not otherwise want to, it is illegitimate.¹¹

Esslin is here making a distinction between art and propaganda, or violence directed at the audience, not within the world of the play, between character and character. Interestingly enough, Esslin feels the most aggressive theatre in this sense is the one "that covers up and prettifies the human situation,"¹² and to this category he consigns the ordinary entertainment theatre, television and much of radio. He seems to have succumbed to the bugaboo that mass media can only be an instrument of hypnosis.

The use of more subtle forms of violence can involve a dramatic buildup of an act which is in itself not essentially shocking or deeply violent. Or the preparation for violence, may eliminate the horror of the ultimate act. The anticipation of violence, as film-makers such as Alfred Hitchcock have profitably discovered, can be far more disturbing than the final knife-thrust, which creates a corpse with all the banality of a lamb chop. The latent violence of language has been dramatised by Eugene Ionesco in The Lesson, where the pupil is broken down by the professor's reiteration of the word "knife." When the real article is produced, for which the word is only a sign, and the professor kills the girl in what amounts to an erotic murder, the act is complete, but we realise that it is only the consummation of a process of psychological and linguistic domination that has occupied the play from the beginning. Ionesco, in characteristic fashion, turns the orgasmic killing into a 'sick' joke: we learn that this is his fortieth

pupil, one more example of the maid's wise dictum, "philology leads to crime." The professor advises the maid not to spend too much on the wreaths; after all, the pupil didn't pay for her lesson, and he wonders with comic naivety whether "there's a chance we'll get pinched. . . with forty coffins!"

Harold Pinter is another dramatist who has made use of violence in varying ways. Generally, however, the appearance of violent acts in his plays is not accompanied by any readily recognisable symbolic interpretation. We can make such interpretations of course, and many critics have done so,¹³ but the feeling still remains that Pinter's use of violence is just something that happens, an inherent part of the form of his plays as they develop.

In Pinter's play, The Homecoming, there is actually very little overt physical violence, yet the play is permeated with an atmosphere of almost animal conflict. It is as if, like defensive animals, the characters sense that a show of strength will bluff the adversary, in this case a linguistic display of brutality, crammed with images of violence. The opening dialogue of the play, between Max and his son Lenny, fixes the room, in which all the action of the play takes place, as an arena:

MAX: What have you done with the scissors?

Pause

I said I'm looking for the scissors. What have you done with them?

Pause

Did you hear me? I want to cut something out of the paper.

LENNY: I'm reading the paper.

MAX: Not that paper. I haven't even read that paper. I'm talking about last Sunday's paper. I was just having a look at it in the kitchen.

Pause

Do you hear what I'm saying? I'm talking to you! Where's the scissors?

LENNY (looking up quietly): Why don't you shut up, you daft prat?

Max lifts his stick and points it at him.

MAX: Don't you talk to me like that. I'm warning you.¹⁴

Max proceeds to reminisce about his youth, and his dead wife, in a characteristically brutal way:

. . . We were two of the worst hated men in the West End of London. I tell you, I still got the scars. We'd walk into a place, the whole room'd stand up, they'd make way to let us pass. You never heard such silence. Mind you, he was a big man, he was over six feet tall. His family were all MacGregors, they came all the way from Aberdeen, but he was the only one they called Mac.

Pause

He was very fond of your mother, Mac was. Very fond. He always had a good word for her.

Pause

Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway.

LENNY: Plug it, will you, you stupid sod, I'm trying to read the paper.

MAX: Listen! I'll chop your spine off, you talk to me like that! You understand? Talking to your lousy filthy father like that!

LENNY: You know what, you're getting demented.¹⁵

Max displays the same threatening aggression towards his brother, Sam, who along with Teddy, is a character who plays a passive role through-

out the play.

MAX: You're a maggot.

SAM: Oh yes?

MAX: As soon as you stop paying your way here, I mean when you're too old to pay your way, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to give you the boot.

SAM: You are, eh?

MAX: Sure. I mean, bring in the money and I'll put up with you. But when the firm gets rid of you—you can flake off.¹⁶

Sam's final collapse near the end of the play is treated coolly by the other characters: Max doesn't like the idea of a corpse on his floor, and Teddy merely says, "I was going to ask him to drive me to London Airport." Thus his death, or collapse, we are not sure which it is, becomes a 'sick' joke. The whole play is outside any kind of morality, and is not really concerned to produce laughter as a corrective: we laugh perhaps because this shocking, amoral world is almost unbelievable, and because it is interspersed with banal platitudes about filial devotion, and the dead Jessie, whose image seems to alternate between angel and whore. Ruth fits the same double image, though ultimately she is more whore than angel. The play abounds with violent juxtapositions of this kind: while Ruth is writhing erotically on the sofa with Joey, after a kissing session with Lenny, Max is treating Teddy to a few platitudes about her:

MAX: You going, Teddy? Already?

Pause

Well, when you coming over again, eh? Look next time you come over, don't forget to let us know beforehand whether you're married or not. I'll always be glad to meet the wife. Honest. I'm telling you.

Joey lies heavily on Ruth.

They are almost still.

Lenny caresses her hair.

Listen, you think I don't know why you didn't tell me you were married? I know why. You were ashamed. You thought I'd be annoyed because you married a woman beneath you. You should have known me better. I'm broad-minded. I'm a broad-minded man.

He peers to see Ruth's face under Joey, turns back to Teddy.

Mind you, she's a lovely girl. A beautiful woman. And a mother too. A mother of three. You've made a happy woman out of her. It's something to be proud of. I mean, we're talking about a woman of quality. We're talking about a woman of feeling.

Joey and Ruth roll off the sofa on to the floor.¹⁷

Ruth also is a creature of the jungle, and the colourless Teddy, her husband, who, as he says, can only act "on things," not in them, is clearly no rival to these dark male animals who desire her as wife, mother and whore. The measure of Teddy is that he seems quite content to exchange his wife for Lenny's cheese roll, and to return to America, which is visualised in the play as clean, desert-like, with all the aridity that implies. Ruth prefers the 'teeming life' of the jungle.

Dali, paranoia and The Dwarfs

The art of Dali, the most hallucinatory known until now, constitutes a real menace. Absolutely new and visibly malintentioned beings hereupon enter into play. It is with a sinister joy that we watch them pass by unhindered, and realize, from the way in which they multiply and swoop down, that they are beings of prey.

— André Breton

Most of us probably suffer from mild forms of paranoia: we see rain clouds as malevolent, and in the dark, an innocent, inanimate object can take the aspect of menace. The true paranoid, however, systematises menace:

Paranoia, as we know, is delirious interpretation of the world, and of the ego, which is given an exaggerated importance. But what distinguishes this disease from other forms of delirium is a perfect and coherent systematization, the accession of a state of impotence which often leads the sufferer, moreover, to megalomania or persecution mania. It naturally assumes a number of forms, coherent from their point of departure, and is accompanied by hallucinations, delirious interpretations of real phenomena.¹⁸

Salvador Dali, the ebullient PR man of surrealism for a time, evolved an experimental approach to art which he termed "paranoiac-critical activity." He sought to give concrete expression, in his paintings, to the experience of the irrational mind:

My whole ambition in the pictorial domain is to materialise the images of concrete irrationality with the most imperialist fury of precision—in order that the world of the imagination and of concrete irrationality may be as objectively evident, of the same consistency, of the same durability, of the same persuasive, cognoscitive and communicable thickness as that of the exterior world of reality. . . . Paranoia: delirium of interpretive association bearing a systematic structure. Paranoiac-critical activity: spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based upon the interpretative-critical association of delirious phenomena Paranoiac-critical activity organizes and objectivizes in an exclusivist manner the limitless and unknown possibilities of the systematic association of subjective and objective phenomena, which appear to us as irrational solicitations, exclusively in favour of the obsessing

idea. By this method paranoiac-critical activity discovers new and objective "significances" in the irrational; it makes the world of delirium pass tangibly onto the plane of reality.¹⁹

We are accustomed to think of paranoia in its acute stage, when the subjective response becomes obsessive, colouring all of reality with its overwhelming subjectivity. The exterior world becomes subservient to the inner reality, and operates as tangible proof of the obsession.

Dali felt that paranoia was basically a mechanism of the mind that could be controlled and cultivated by the artist, for the purpose of demonstrating the incidence of subjectivity in our so-called objective world of reality. Much of Dali's art depends on this organised hallucinatory activity, the ability to create mutually dependent images within one painting. In his painting Paranoiac Face (1935),²⁰ there is an obvious double image, for what at first glance appears to be a group of blacks sitting near a clump of bushes becomes a huge distorted face floating on water. What amounts to a fairly simple visual play is an attack on fixed, rigid reality, and a realisation that things need not necessarily be 'what they seem'. Dali's paranoiac-critical method, which is really not much more than an artistic exploitation of the irrational mind's ability to perceive several realities simultaneously, is perhaps the most striking evidence of the surrealist refusal to be bound by the rational: in fact to question the reality of the known, the established.

Many of Harold Pinter's characters display paranoid characteristics in varying degrees. Frequently, their nameless fears are concretised by the arrival of other, mysteriously threatening characters. Stanley, in The Birthday Party, is unduly disturbed by Meg's announcement

that two men are coming to stay for a few nights. His fears are justified, for the visitors turn out to be a pair of psychological Mafia men, who effectively destroy Stanley, and cart him off for "special treatment." In Tea Party, a play originally written for television, we have the portrayal of one character's subjective response to reality: the play alternates between Disson's point of view, and shots which include him. This technique creates a double set of realities, and leaves the viewer uncertain about what is really happening in the play, unable to decide which view is the true one. Is Disson merely projecting his obsession that all about him are conspirators, figures of menace? Whatever interpretation one may adopt, and it is possible to adopt either quite convincingly, it is clear that the play is exploring the notion of the impossibility of verifying reality, and the possibility of multiple interpretations of that reality. As Edgar Allan Poe has put it, "the naked senses sometimes see too little—but then always they see too much."²¹ Disson has apparently seen too much, and is eventually destroyed by his particular 'view'. The same kind of problem is presented in The Collection, where a number of possible truths are proffered, as to what actually happened between Stella and Bill at a dress collection in Leeds.

The Collection is essentially a light-hearted treatment of the need for verification: James and Bill are still on the rational side of the mirror, but Len, in The Dwarfs, can't see the mirror side:

LEN: This is a funny toasting fork. Do you ever make any toast?

He drops the fork on the floor.

Don't touch it! You don't know what will happen if you touch it! You mustn't touch it! You mustn't bend!

Wait. (Pause) I'll bend. I'll. . . pick it up. I'm going to touch it. (Pause. . . softly) There. You see? Nothing happens when I touch it. Nothing. Nothing can happen. No one would bother. (A broken sigh) You see, I can't see the broken glass. I can't see the mirror I have to look through. I see the other side. The other side. But I can't see the mirror side. (Pause) I want to break it, all of it. But how can I break it? How can I break it when I can't see it?²²

For Len, the perception of reality is fluid, ever changing, and he is immersed in total subjectivity. He questions whether the brass toasting fork is a monkey's head, he sees Pete's hand as that of a homicidal maniac, and the light bulb becomes a dagger. He has been ambushed by the commonplace, and the culprits are the dwarfs, whom he can only temporarily keep at bay:

LEN: There is my table. That is a table. There is my chair. There is my table. That is a bowl of fruit. There is my chair. There are my curtains. There is no wind. It is past night and before morning. This is my room. There is the wallpaper, on the walls. There are six walls. Eight walls. An octagon. This room is an octagon.²³

As long as Len can fix everything, keep the labels straight, remain in the "deep grass," there is no ambush, no voices, and no hole in his side. But the labels are forever slipping, getting out of focus.

LEN: The rooms we live in. . . open and shut. (Pause) Can't you see? They change shape at their own will. I wouldn't grumble if only they would keep to some consistency. But they don't. And I can't tell the limits, the boundaries, which I've been led to believe are natural. I'm all for the natural behaviour of rooms, doors, staircases, the lot. But I can't rely on them. When, for example, I look through a train window, at night, and see the yellow lights, very clearly, I can see what they are, and I see that they're still. But they're only still because I'm moving. I know that they do move along with me, and when we go round a bend, they bump off. But I know that they are still, just the same. They are after all, stuck on poles which are rooted to the earth. So they must be still, in their own right, insofar as the earth itself is still, which of course it isn't. The point is, in a nutshell, that I can only appreciate such facts when I'm moving. When I'm still, nothing around me follows a

natural course of conduct. I'm not saying I'm any criterion, I wouldn't say that. After all, when I'm on the train I'm not really moving at all. That's obvious. I'm in the corner seat. I'm still. I am perhaps being moved, but I do not move. Neither do the yellow lights. The train moves, granted, but what's a train got to do with it?²⁴

Pete criticises Len's subjectivity, warning him that "they'll lock you up before you're much older." For Pete, a distance must be preserved between "what you smell and what you think about it," in other words, between objective reality and the subjective response to it. But for Len, "there is a different sky" each time he looks. Perhaps his paranoia is infectious, as Pete, despite his hope to assess and verify, relates a grotesque dream he has had about a girl with a peeling face, and he wonders if his face is peeling off also. Later in the play, as he and Mark are about to visit Len in hospital, Pete displays something of Len's dangerous curiosity:

PETE: What's up?

MARK: What?

PETE: What's up?

MARK: What do you mean?

PETE: You're wearing a gas-mask.

MARK: Not me.²⁵

The question Len is asking is "who are you?" However, if the objective response is mystifying, the subjective one is equally so. Len sees Pete and Mark as figures of menace, and the dwarfs have fallen down on the job of observing them, allowing them to penetrate Len's corner. To Len, Pete is a destructive gull, and Mark a malevolent spider. He cannot fix either of them:

LEN: The point is, who are you? Not why or how, not even what. I can see what, perhaps, clearly enough. But who are you? It's no use saying you know who you are just because you tell me you can fit your particular key into a particular slot, which will only receive your particular key because that's not foolproof and certainly not conclusive. . . . What you are, or appear to be to me, or appear to be to you, changes so quickly, so horrifyingly, I certainly can't keep up with it and I'm damn sure you can't either. But who you are I can't even begin to recognise, and sometimes I recognise it so wholly, so forcibly, I can't look, and how can I be certain of what I see? You have no number. Where am I to look, where am I to look, what is there to locate, so as to have some surety, to have some rest from this whole bloody racket? You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? What scum does the tide leave? What happens to the scum? When does it happen? I've seen what happens. But I can't speak when I see it. I can only point a finger. I can't even do that. The scum is broken and sucked back. I don't see where it goes. I don't see then, what do I see, what have I seen? What have I seen, the scum or the essence? . . .²⁶

James, in The Collection, wanted to know what had happened in Leeds, between his wife and Bill. Len has gone further: what happens has become a secondary problem for him; his delirium consists of being unable to fix the essence of the things and people which seem to close in upon him. Len goes to hospital, ostensibly for kidney trouble; has he been normalised, tidied up, as Stanley was in The Birthday Party, and Aston in The Caretaker? Stanley was reduced to a grunting cretin, and Aston to an apprehensive silence, and the aimless collection of junk. Len's tortured imaginative vision seems to have disappeared with the dwarfs, and he can now label his scrubbed world:

. . . Now all is bare. All is clean. All is scrubbed.
There is a lawn. There is a shrub. There is a flower.²⁷

However, Len can still 'smell a rat'. Whether he is really cured, and if indeed, the cure is to be desired, remains an enigma.

René Magritte, the suppression of narrative,
and Harold Pinter

A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things.

— Harold Pinter

The paintings of René Magritte puzzle and fascinate. One of the chief reasons for this is that they are essentially non-narrative: people and objects are suspended, caught, on canvas to create images which seem to have no past and no future. The objects are frequently commonplace, a lemon, a jug, a sponge, as in the painting The Familiar Objects (1927 or 1928),²⁸ but they are divorced from their customary environment in such a way that we are forced to see them for themselves. Magritte's paintings are to be looked at, not looked into. As the painter himself has said:

If one looks at a thing with the intention of trying to discover what it means, one ends up no longer seeing the thing itself, but thinking of the question that has been raised.²⁹

Magritte's situations often have no history, as no evidence is offered as to how they came about, and what hints there may be of what will happen next provoke more questions than they provide answers. For example, in a painting entitled The Heart of the Matter (1928),³⁰ there is a woman, with a cloth over her head, standing in front of a suitcase and a tuba: there is no clue as to her destiny or destination, or if even a journey is intended. There is a story in The Threatened Assassin (1926 or 1927),³¹ but it is still highly mysterious. There is a dead girl lying on a couch, with her killer dreamily listening to a gramophone

record, while outside the door, two poker-faced men with bowler hats lie in wait with a club and a net. Outside the window, three identical men stare in; who are they? Are they also agents of arrest, or are they something like the three Fates? And why did the assassin stop to listen to a record? The whole painting is like an illustration of a detective story that begins in the middle.

David Sylvester in his introduction to Magritte's work, elaborates on the effect of his images on the spectator:

Pharaoh's dreams were interpreted because they were messages from God; ours because they are messages from ourselves. Magritte presents dreamlike images as experiences not messages. He evokes extreme or impossible physiological states or events which have an intense affective import—being crowded, being trapped, being immobilized, defying gravity, etc.—with great immediacy but no sensuous correlative, just as in dreams the action is all in one's head. And he depicts this action with a conspicuous absence of distortion, so that the artist seems to have no attitude towards the phenomenon and the spectator is not distracted by speculation as to what is meant, is left free to concentrate on what is there. . . . Magritte is not a painter of martyrdoms or massacres. He can provoke disquiet and mounting panic, say coolly fixing in mid-air something normally earthbound: orderly ranks of ordinary men; everyday objects floating in front of faces; or simply—excluding the affective charge of a human presence. . . . The drama is impersonal: the suspension of gravity; the suspension of time. It induces a nameless terror like the instinctive dread felt during the total eclipse.³²

Thus Magritte does not deal with the fabulous, the freely fantastic, but with the absurd: a door exists so that people can walk through it, so Magritte painted a door which looks as though someone had walked through it when it was shut (The Unexpected Answer, 1933).³³ His work is intensely real, not distorted.

One might say of many of Harold Pinter's plays that they are like detective stories which seem to begin in the middle. Background information is certainly not completely suppressed, but what little there is, is presented ambiguously. This vagueness has led some critics

into elaborate interpretations of his plays, including highly detailed comparisons with myth, as in Katherine Burkman's recent study.³⁴ What these critics are doing is considering 'the question that has been raised', rather than the thing itself. It seems to me that Pinter intends us to see questions of motive, of past and future, as basically irrelevant to the drama at hand. Many of his characters talk about their past, and also about future plans, but they do so in the form of reminiscence or dream, and it is difficult to determine anything definitive about what they may or may not have been, or will be. Stanley in The Birthday Party was apparently a concert pianist, if we can believe his garrulous tales; Aston in The Caretaker is going to build a shed, but we doubt if this will ever happen. Davies in the same play 'doth protest too much' that Jenkins is not his real name and thus his true identity becomes suspect:

ASTON: Why, someone after you?

DAVIES: After me? I could have that Scotch git coming looking after me, couldn't I? All I'd do, I'd hear the bell, I'd go down there, open the door, who might be there, any Harry might be there. I could be bugged as easy as that, man. They might be there after my card, I mean look at it, here I am, I only got four stamps, on this card, here it is, look, four stamps, that's all I got, I ain't got any more, that's all I got, they ring the bell called Caretaker, they'd have me in, that's what they'd do, I wouldn't stand a chance. Of course I got plenty of other cards lying about, but they don't know that, and I can't tell them, can I, because then they'd find out I was going about under an assumed name. You see, the name I call myself now, that's not my real name. My real name's not the one I'm using, you see. It's different. You see, the name I go under now ain't my real one. It's assumed.

Silence³⁵

This amusingly repetitive monologue of Davies' serves to confuse us as to who exactly he is, and to establish him as a man with a vague fear

of 'them'. Who 'they' are, and why Davies (Jenkins?) should be hounded by them, or whether there really is a man in Sidcup with his "references" are all questions left unanswered. Aston is a character who is 'fixed' in more than one way: his operation has supposedly normalised him, and throughout the play he remains quiet, static, preoccupied with his ever-growing collection of junk. He reminds us of Teddy in The Homecoming, who could only work "on things" not "in" them. Mick is perhaps the most fluid character in the play. He alternates between menace and ingratiation, with such mercurial speed that he invites speculation on our part as to motivation or personality. . Ironically enough, Davies thinks Mick is the more straightforward of the brothers, or at least he pretends to think this, in his efforts to ingratiate himself with the younger brother. At the end of Act 1, Mick has manhandled Davies, reducing him to a fearful heap; Mick then proceeds to interrogate the old tramp, alternating between long inconsequential monologue and sharp questions. Mick's performance here is that of the 'quick change artist', and surrounds the nature of both his and Davies' identity with an atmosphere of mystery.

MICK: . . . You remind me of my uncle's brother. He was always on the move, that man. Never without his passport. Had an eye for the girls. Very much your build. Bit of an athlete. Long-jump specialist. He had the habit of demonstrating different run-ups in the drawing room round about Christmas time. Had a penchant for nuts. That's what it was. Nothing else but a penchant. Couldn't eat enough of them. Peanuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, monkey nuts, wouldn't touch a piece of fruitcake. Had a marvelous stopwatch. Picked it up in Hong Kong. The day after they chucked him out of the Salvation Army. Used to go in number four for Beckenham Reserves. That was before he got his Gold Medal. Had a funny habit of carrying his fiddle on his back. Like a papoose. I think there was a bit of the Red Indian in him. To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother. I've often thought that maybe it was the other way round. I mean

that my uncle was his brother and he was my uncle. But I never called him uncle. As a matter of fact, I called him Sid. My mother called him Sid too. It was a funny business. Your spitting image he was. Married a Chinaman and went to Jamaica.

Pause

I hope you slept well last night.

DAVIES: Listen! I don't know who you are!

MICK: What bed you sleep in?

DAVIES: Now look here -

MICK: Eh?

DAVIES: That one.

MICK: Not the other one?

DAVIES: No

MICK: Choosy.

Pause

How do you like my room?³⁶

Martin Esslin, in his book The Peopled Wound, takes the above long monologue of Mick's to show that Davies is an archetypal father image who is ousted by his two sons.³⁷ However, the passage is so packed with outlandish 'facts' as to render it unbelievable, and invites incredulous laughter, which would seem to cancel out any response to it as being deeply, archetypally significant. This not to deny that Davies is such an archetype, merely to question Esslin's response to this particular speech.

In a brief, but cogent study of Harold Pinter, Walter Kerr attributes the lack of definition in his plays to a dramatic working-out of the existentialist idea that existence precedes essence. I don't know that we need go this far in tagging Pinter himself, but at least

this approach does acknowledge the essential mystery and fluidity of Pinter's plays.

Watching a Pinter play, we give over the scramble to stick pins in ideas and fix them forever to a drawing board. We feel that the drawing board isn't there and that our eager thumbs would only go through it Objects observed in a Pinter play tend to generate something like awe. They may be utterly commonplace, they usually are; yet they seem uncommon here because they have not been absorbed into a pattern that explains them away as mere tools of a narrative or as looming symbols of conceptual value. Sometimes these objects acquire such self-importance as to seem ominous, though that is not their initial function in a Pinter play. If we feel faintly startled to see how solid a cup is, or how shaped, we feel so—in the beginning—only because we are used to ignoring the solidity and shapes of cups in our absentminded lives. Normally we think of a cup as a means to an end, as an indifferent utility making a passing contribution to another, much more identifiable, purpose: our tea, our pleasure, our life-roles as wife, husband, host. Thinking of a cup in this way, we render it more or less invisible. In effect, we make it absent. . . . At the same time that the tangible is insisted upon, literally thrust into our faces, the surrounding void is implied. The void is outside the room, upstairs, downstairs, everywhere beyond the walls. The real is real. The void envelops it. It is all rather as though a cyclone had picked up a still intact shed—as we used to see cyclones do in the movies—and was carrying it, still intact, through unknown air to an unknown end.³⁸

Identity in a Pinter play thus becomes movement, not category, and the insistence on the tangible, the object, or person-as-object (for example, the matchseller in A Slight Ache, Bert in The Room) of itself, and for itself, creates the characteristic texture of a Pinter play, the banality of the solidly real, which makes the action of the play more terrifying. We might allow René Magritte the last word:

When people try to find symbolic meanings in what I paint, they are finding a construction. They want something to lean on. That is what I find so infuriating about people who look for—and manage to find—symbols. They want to be comfortable, to have something secure to hang on to, to save themselves from the void. They are quite willing to use objects without looking for any symbolic intention in them, but when they look at paintings, they can't find any use for them. So they hunt around for a meaning to get themselves out of the quandary, and because they don't understand what it is they are supposed to think when they confront the painting. Lautréamont's image, for example, the chance encounter on a dissecting table of an umbrella and a sewing machine, could also be described in a manner of speaking as symbolic:

of disorder, since things are not where they are supposed to be. But to say that is to fail to grasp the inherent poetry and mystery of the image. People who look for symbolic meanings no doubt sense this mystery, but they wish to get rid of it. By asking 'what does this mean?' they express a desire for everything to be understandable. But if one does not reject the mystery, one has quite a different response.³⁹

Paradoxically enough, the search for "meaning in" both Magritte and Pinter is what makes their work more involving and artistically engaging.

Esslin on Pinter •

Esslin's theory, which he reiterates to the point of monotony, in connection with Pinter's plays, seems to fit well with the surrealist method of investigation (i.e., plumbing of psychic depths); although this method may not, of course, be confined to the surrealist movement, the surrealists codified their principles into a set of artistic solutions. We cannot say that Pinter deliberately used the surrealist 'modus operandi' in conscious application, but he may be one of those who keep the surrealist mode alive. Esslin terms Pinter's early poems "surrealist automatic writing," and stresses the dream element in Pinter's plays, tracing echoes between the poems and the later dramatic work. "Thus The Basement", says Esslin, "must be either a kind of dream or daydream."⁴⁰ Esslin's basis for the application of psychoanalytic study to Pinter's plays is the impact of the common myth on the audience, which produces subconscious responses to the dramatic material. However, it occurs to me that these 'subconscious' responses are no longer so, or rather, are also conscious as well: we have been told so often about our inevitable Oedipus complexes, deep-seated sexual aggression, death-wish, territorial jealousy, that these have become

institutionalised in the furniture of our minds, rationalised also by laughter and example. Many of the psychological slogans and formulas have become perhaps less meaningful in our time, with overuse, and to apply them alone to the work of art is to reduce that work to a cliché, albeit a psychological cliché. The dark and secret mysteries which Freud first exposed in the middle-class population of Vienna have become standard observations of the archetypal literary critics, and graffiti on lavatory walls. Thus the exposure of archetype in Pinter's plays is only really a jumping-off point into the individual properties of each play, as an artistic unit.

Esslin discerns the level of the real, and of the dream in

Pinter:

But like most of Pinter's plays, The Homecoming also exists on another level: its real, its realistic action is a metaphor of human desires and aspirations, a myth, a dream image, a projection of archetypal fears and wishes. Just as the events in the Oedipus of Sophocles or in King Lear. . . can also be seen as dreams, nightmares of guilt and human suffering, The Homecoming also transcends the realistic level to become just such an archetypal image.⁴¹

Unfortunately, perhaps, Esslin is overconcerned in this book to somehow establish a plausible, realistic, non-archetypal environment for plays and a playwright who, as he states, rejects "the conventional exposition in drama, which, in a few and clever strokes, purports to introduce the principal characters to us. . ." Luckily for us, Esslin has provided us with those strokes, though his are many, and not especially clever.

Pinter: an English myth-maker?

I suggest there can be no hard distinction between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false.

— Harold Pinter

Wishing to restore psychic unity to the human spirit, and to establish what they felt to be the identity of spirit and matter, the surrealists naturally rejected traditional myths such as Christianity, which emphasises the split between spirit and matter. More akin to the surrealist search are the myths of primitive religions, magic and alchemy, in which matter is endowed with spirit. The strange, disturbing paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, in which trains, chimneys and railway stations take on the atmosphere of a hushed Greek ruin, reveal the artist's preoccupation with architecture and space as mood. Speaking of one of de Chirico's most famous paintings, The Disquieting Muses (1917), James Thrall Soby writes:

The picture attracts and repels, beguiles and frightens, conveys a warm nostalgic aura but at the same time suggests an impending catastrophe. There is no action; the piazza is still; the figures wait. What will happen? . . . De Chirico's image—his early art as a whole—appeals directly to the counter-logic of the subconscious, to those swamp-like regions at the edge of the mind where ecstasies bloom white and the roots of fear are cypress-black and deep.⁴²

This appeal to the subconscious is basic to surrealist effort; however, the descent into deeper and deeper layers of the mind is countered by the surrealist flight of fancy. Both journeys, of course, oppose a total enslavement to the real, a refusal to recognise indeed that the real and the unreal are distinct. As Wallace Fowlie has concluded in his book on surrealism:

During most of its life, the human spirit lives in exile. In the creation of poetry, it leaves its exile and returns to its natural climate, into the region where it acquires its full powers of enchant-

ment and witchcraft and transformation. Realism is always just below poetry as mythology is always just above. Surrealism is an exceptional way by which a correspondence is established between realism and mythology.⁴³

Since the surrealists were researching the unconscious mind, the submerged layers, where, the Jungian psychologists maintain,⁴⁴ the great universal myths lie, it is not surprising that they tended to mythologise. The dreaming mind expresses itself in narrative form, in apparently illogical and irrational forms, which puzzle the conscious mind. Dreams demand interpretation, as do the paintings of many surrealists; the mysterious, partial anecdotes of Magritte, Dali and Tanguy have all the inexplicable power of dream pictures, and establish a mythology, a set of symbols that are almost the particular trademarks of each: Dali's soft watches and swarms of ants, Tanguy's strange yet familiar organic blobs, and Magritte's bowler-hatted men. Magritte himself denies that his pictures contain symbols, yet one can't help wondering why he chooses the particular objects, such as the apple and the dove which appear mysteriously suspended over the faces of his businessmen, objects which have universal significance.

Harold Pinter, not unlike Magritte, refuses to be categorised, indeed is rather coolly contemptuous of those who attach lofty interpretations to his plays:

I have usually begun a play in quite a simple manner; found a couple of characters in a particular context, thrown them together and listened to what they said, keeping my nose to the ground. The context has always been for me, concrete and particular, and the characters concrete also. I've never started a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory and never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way, as allegorical representations of any particular force, whatever that may mean. When a character cannot be comfortably defined or understood in terms of the familiar, the tendency is to perch him on a symbolic shelf, out of harm's way. Once there, he can be talked about but need not be lived with. In this way, it is easy to put up a pretty efficient smoke screen, on the part of the

critics or the audience, against recognition, against an active and willing participation.⁴⁵

However, the very fluidity of Pinter's situations, his concern to de-mythologise, suppress explanation in the pursuit of his elusive characters, may have resulted in his creating a new kind of mythology, which is distinctively English in flavour. His plays certainly readily lend themselves to archetypal interpretation; the recurring motifs of expulsion, battle over territory, woman as mother-cum-whore seem to be irruptions of a layer of consciousness that lies beneath the banal surface of his realism, and these motifs, along with his characteristic atmosphere of mystery, menace and "things that go tick in the night" have become Pinter's trademarks. Some critics have resorted to detailed researching of historical myths to explain Pinter's work, but this is not really essential; myth after all, is timeless, having its origin in the subconscious, and is readily recognisable, even couched in the idiom of East London.

Ionesco, Pinter and linguistic strip-tease

- How can you light a kettle?
- It's a figure of speech! Light the kettle. It's a figure of speech!
- I've never heard of it.

—Harold Pinter

The image of a kettle burning is one which we might expect to see in a Dali painting; the concrete representation of much of the patina of everyday speech reveals its surreal quality. The surrealists, in their linguistic games, were attempting to reinvigorate the carapace of language. Their play turned up striking sets of juxtaposed images,

and inversions of clichés: "one good mistress deserves another", "a corset in July is worth a horde of rats", "beat your mother while she's young"⁴⁶ are several examples. Ionesco, in many of his plays, displays something of the same schoolboyish delight in playing tricks with cliché-ridden language; he frequently gives a character a seemingly logical sequence of hackneyed speech containing jarring elements, which make a farce of the whole speech:

FATHER JACK: . You are no son of mine. I disown you. You're not worthy of my ancestors. You resemble your mother and the idiots and imbeciles in her family. This doesn't matter to her for she's only a woman, and what a woman! In short, I needn't elegeize her here. I have only this to say to you: impeccably brought up, like an aristocrat, in a family of veritable leeches, of authentic torpedoes. . .⁴⁷

In The Bald Soprano Ionesco treats us to a series of distorted clichés, reminiscent of surrealist word treatments: "I prefer a bird in the bush to a sparrow in a barrow", "he who sells an ox today, will have an egg tomorrow";⁴⁸ and the play ends with the characters hurling associative nonsense phrase sounds and even vowels at each other. The irrational, jarring elements in the conversation have taken over, and the characters in a sense have been linguistically bared. But Ionesco's ritual stripping of character remains essentially locked within his use of language, in its specifically verbal aspect, and since verbal communication is but one of many forms of language these plays must inevitably remain on a relatively superficial level; we get the sense that the characters, if one could call them that, are illustrations of a linguistic delirium.

Edward T. Hall, in The Silent Language, deals with ten categories within what he terms our "Primary Message System," and quite surprisingly perhaps, only one of his categories, that of "interaction" involves the use of speech.

Interaction has its basis in the underlying irritability of all living substance. To interact with the environment is to be alive, and to fail to do so is to be dead. . . . One of the most highly elaborated forms of interaction is speech, which is reinforced by tone of voice and gesture. . . . Ultimately everything man does involves interaction with something else. Interaction lies at the hub of the universe of culture and everything grows from it.⁴⁹

The rest of Hall's categories might be loosely grouped under 'behavioral' language, regarding the use of time, space, territory, play and defense to name a number of them. He is careful to point out, however, that each of these message systems is enmeshed in the others. Behavioral language, Hall maintains, can frequently tell us more about a person than the language of speech; just as the language of dreams is revealing, so is behavioral language, but unlike dreams, it cannot be hidden from others, although one may be unaware of it in himself.

Harold Pinter, it seems to me, has effectively exploited this 'other' language in his plays; his pauses and silences allow time for his characters to communicate in other ways to us, if not to each other. McCann in The Birthday Party ritually tears up newspaper on two occasions, thus communicating, and reinforcing his expressed hesitancy about what is to be done to Stanley. Stanley himself expresses a violence beyond words in his drum-beating, and attacks on Meg and Lulu. Pinter also uses the jarring element in dialogue, but to convey more than just comic effect, for example, in Tea Party:

. . . He has married my sister, who possesses within her that rare and uncommon attribute known as inner beauty, not to mention the loveliness of her exterior. Par excellence as a woman with the needle, beyond excellence as a woman of taste, discernment, sensibility and imagination. An excellent swimmer who, in all probability, has the beating of her husband in the two hundred metres breast stroke.⁵⁰

The incongruities of "needle" and "breast stroke" inserted into the flowery phrases are more than amusing: Disson's later breakdown might

be partly attributable to his wife's putting the 'needle' into him, and to his own preoccupation with matters erotic. Pinter is also capable of quite subtle juxtapositions:

TEDDY: What do you think of the room? Big, isn't it? It's a big house. I mean, it's a fine room, don't you think? actually there was a wall, across there. . . with a door. We knocked it down. . . years ago. . . to make an open living area. The structure wasn't affected, you see. My mother was dead.⁵¹

In The Birthday Party, Goldberg and McCann use language as a bludgeoning instrument in interrogating Stanley, and like the pupil in Ionesco's play, The Lesson, Stanley speaks of physical symptoms; his "feet hurt" and he has a headache. However, the linguistic brutality is accompanied by concrete expression of it; Stanley kicks Goldberg, and he and McCann circle each other with chairs. Stanley is stripped of increasingly deeper layers of personality, until, after the game of blindman's buff, he is not much more than a giggling cretin. His transformation into a "new man," complete with cleanshaven face, dark suit and white collar, is accompanied by Goldberg's and McCann's attempts to re-clothe him linguistically.

GOLDBERG: We'll make a man of you.

McCANN: And a woman.

GOLDBERG: You'll be re-orientated.

McCANN: You'll be rich.

GOLDBERG: You'll be adjusted.

McCANN: You'll be our pride and joy.

GOLDBERG: You'll be a mensch.

McCANN: You'll be a success.

GOLDBERG: You'll be integrated.⁵²

However, the only reply Stanley can give to this "prospect" is a series of grunts and gurgles.

In Pinter's play, The Basement, we have an expression of the language of space, and ultimately of territory; Stott and Law begin with polite pleasantries, which deteriorate and change, as the basement itself changes in décor; finally the two men are stripped of all 'civilised' trappings, as is the space:

. . . The room is completely bare.
Bare walls. Bare floorboards. No furniture. One hanging bulb.
Stott and Law at opposite ends of the room.
They face each other. They are barefooted. They each hold a
broken milk bottle. They are crouched, still.⁵³

The linguistic defrocking is thus accompanied by an actual, physical defrocking.

Pinter and silence

There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. For certain engineering purposes, it is desirable to have as silent a situation as possible. Such a room is called an anechoic chamber, its six walls made of special material, a room without echoes. I entered one at Harvard University several years ago and heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation. Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death.

—John Cage⁵⁴

Thus there can be no thing such as absolute silence. Silence may become a deliberate choice on the part of the artist; Marcel Duchamp turned to chess, and Greta Garbo rendered her films unforgettable by her retreat from them. But silence may exist as relative, perceived in relation to its dialectical opposite, speech or sound. Susan Sontag, in her Styles of Radical Will, sees the movement toward minimal art as a strategy for improving audience experience:

The motions of silence, emptiness and reduction sketch out new prescriptions for looking, hearing, etc.—which either promote a more immediate, sensuous experience of art or confront the artwork in a more conscious, conceptual way.⁵⁵

Minimal art, such as Duchamp's bottle rack, or Magritte's picture of a pipe, bearing the inscription, "this is not a pipe", forces the spectator to approach it as he would a landscape, without adding anything to it. Silence in this case consists of an absence of artistic clues, inviting what Sontag terms a "stare", rather than a "look", and lending impenetrability to the work of art.

In the theatre, where language is still largely the dominating medium, impenetrability is difficult; language after all is a sort of historical rubbish dump, endowed with the associative meanings of centuries. The use of silence in the theatre can, however, become a tonic for language, a way of making even the most banal dialogue poetic.

Harold Pinter uses silence in varying ways in his dramas. His careful, almost obsessive use of pause is his most characteristic technique, and reinforces his dialogue; words weigh more when punctuated by silences, and in Pinter's plays, silence becomes an anchor to speech. When the auditory stimulus of speech is cut off, we are forced to consider the visual stimulus of the speakers, to relate what has been said to the body who said it: this kind of switch may provide a clue to the solid, sensorial feeling one gets from some of Pinter's plays. A further use of silence is the presence of mute characters. A character who remains silent is in a position to manipulate the other characters into frenzied attempts to penetrate his opacity. This is what happens in A Slight Ache; the silent matchseller becomes a psychological punching bag for Edward and Flora, charging them with the burden of talking. Edward eventually talks himself into silence:

. . . You want to examine the garden? It must be very bright, in the moonlight. (Becoming weaker) I would like to join you. . . explain. . . show you. . . the garden. . . explain . . . The plants. . . where I run. . . my track. . . in training . . . I was number one sprinter at Howells. . . when a stripling . . . no more than a stripling. . . licked. . . men twice my strength. . . when a stripling. . . like yourself.

Pause

(Flatly) The pool must be glistening. In the moonlight. And the lawn. I remember it well. The cliff. The sea. The three-masted schooner.

Pause

(With great, final effort—a whisper) Who are you?⁵⁶

The void induces its opposite: verbosity. Rose, in The Room, carries on an interminable stream of talk, a monologue of repetition which makes of language a magic charm, a rabbit's foot to ward off danger. She is confronted with the silence of her husband, Bert, and with the larger emptiness of the dark world outside her room.

In Pinter's most recent plays, Landscape, Silence, Old Times, and the short sketch, Night, he has established something analogous to the anechoic chamber described by Cage. The characters do not bounce off one another to any extent; they are listening almost to their heartbeats and circulation in a setting abstracted from the stimuli of the concrete. The drama here is exclusively of words, rhythmically punctuated by pause and silence, but the effect, more especially in the two longer plays, is of heard silence. It is as if we were eavesdropping on the silent thoughts of the characters, and since they are pursuing individual streams of consciousness which do not converge, there is silence between them in the sense of non-communication. Ellen, in Silence, is not even sure whether she is speaking or not:

ELLEN: Around me sits the night. Such a silence. I can hear myself. Cup my ear. My heart beats in my ear. Such a silence. Is it me? Am I silent or speaking? How can I know? . . .⁵⁷

Speech, says Sontag, "closes off thought."⁵⁸ Thus silence provides time for the exploration of thought, operating as a gap which keeps things open. In these four short plays of Pinter's, the characters seem to be filling out the gaps, exploring the open spaces created by silence. Pinter himself has spoken of two kinds of silence:

There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of what we don't hear. It

is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke-screen which keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer to nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness.⁵⁹

Pinter's most recent play, Old Times, appears to be a rather longer version of the exploration of silence, as revealed in Landscape and Silence, both one-acters, and in the brief sketch, Night. His last full-length play of any dramatic impact was The Homecoming, written in 1964. However, Pinter has been increasingly moving into the medium of film, a medium also much admired by the surrealists, and has written a number of screenplays, all exhibiting the brilliant spareness characteristic of his dramatic works. Perhaps the camera, with its ability to seduce all our senses simultaneously, is the most appropriate vehicle for a playwright in pursuit of nakedness.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I. An Approach to the Theatre of the Absurd via Surrealism

¹Spender, "The Modern as Vision of a Whole Situation," in Perry, ed., Backgrounds to Modern Literature, 240-241.

²Camus, Rebel, 88-89.

³Breton, quoted in Balakian, Surrealism, 168.

⁴Camus, Rebel, 98-99.

⁵Jaffé in Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, 257.

⁶Masters, Psychedelic Art, 97-98.

⁷Breton, Manifestoes, 29-30.

⁸*Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁹Breton, What is Surrealism?, 69.

¹⁰Breton, Manifestoes, 272-273.

¹¹Read, Philosophy of Modern Art, 20.

¹²*Ibid.*, 115-116.

¹³Ernst, quoted in Breton, Manifestoes, 275.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵La Révolution Surréaliste, No. 1, 1924, 2.

¹⁶Magritte, quoted in Matthews, Introduction to Surrealism, 144.

¹⁷Levy, Surrealism, 22.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 169. [This and all subsequent footnotes to paintings or other art objects refer to publications where such works have been reproduced.]

- ¹⁹ Ibid., 100-104.
- ²⁰ Breton, What is Surrealism?, 39.
- ²¹ Levy, Surrealism, 22.
- ²² Balakian, Surrealism, 172.
- ²³ Ibid., 189.
- ²⁴ Jung, Man and His Symbols, 41.
- ²⁵ Balakian, Surrealism, 204-205.
- ²⁶ Sylvester, Magritte, 82.
- ²⁷ Balakian, Surrealism, 248-249.
- ²⁸ Matthews, Introduction to Surrealism, 29-30.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 29.
- ³⁰ Breton, Entretiens, 248.
- ³¹ Shattuck in Nadeau, History of Surrealism, 18-19.
- ³² Ibid., 19.
- ³³ Kirby, Happenings, 29-40.
- ³⁴ Matthews, Introduction to Surrealism, 112.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 113-114.
- ³⁶ "The Changing Guard," Times Literary Supplement, Aug. 6, 1964,
690-691.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 707
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Calas, in New Directions, (1940), 385-395.

⁴⁰Muller, "Surrealism: a Dissenting Opinion," in New Directions, (1940), 558-559.

⁴¹Sontag, Against Interpretation, 269-270.

⁴²Gascoyne, Short Survey of Surrealism, 35-36.

⁴³Duchamp, quoted in Richter, Dada, 207-208.

⁴⁴Ibid., 212-213.

⁴⁵For a summary of some of this criticism, see Matthews, Introduction to Surrealism, 51-55.

⁴⁶Johnson, Lives of the Poets, I, 14-15.

⁴⁷Eliot, Poems, 72-73.

⁴⁸Williamson, Donne Tradition, 90-98.

⁴⁹Barr, ed., Fantastic Art, 125.

⁵⁰Peret, quoted in Balakian, Surrealism.

⁵¹Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 166-167.

⁵²Breton, Manifestoes, 151-152.

⁵³Breton, "Freedom of Love" in Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares, [no page numbers].

⁵⁴Breton, Manifestoes, 37.

⁵⁵Balakian, Surrealism, 157-167.

⁵⁶Ibid., 165.

⁵⁷Balakian, Surrealism, 243.

⁵⁸Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 151.

⁵⁹Artaud, quoted in Balakian, Surrealism, 243.

⁶⁰Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 42.

⁶¹Breton, Entretiens, 248.

⁶²Breton, quoted in Balakian, Surrealism, 237.

⁶³Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, 476.

⁶⁴Jaffé in Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, 254.

⁶⁵Breton, Manifestoes, 174-175.

⁶⁶Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 49-52.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁹For an account of Artaud's life and work, see Hartnoll, ed., Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 1967, 45-46.

⁷⁰Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 7.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 68.

⁷²Chiari, Landmarks of Contemporary Drama, 203.

⁷³Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 72.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁵Kirby, Happenings, 34-35.

⁷⁶Artaud, Theatre and Its Double, 93-99.

⁷⁷Kirby, Happenings, 21.

⁷⁸McLuhan and Watson, Cliché to Archetype, 205.

⁷⁹Sontag, Against Interpretation, 169.

⁸⁰Emerson, Nature, 55.

Chapter II. Pinter and Surrealism

¹Ionesco, Notes and Counter-Notes, 178-179.

²Ibid., 165.

³Hollis, Harold Pinter, 1.

⁴Pinter, Room and the Dumb Waiter, 12-13.

⁵Koester, Act of Creation, 95.

⁶Jung, Man and His Symbols, 256.

⁷Pinter, Birthday Party, 87.

⁸Calas, "The Meaning of Surrealism" in New Directions, (1940),
390.

⁹Kyd, in Thorndyke, ed., Minor Elizabethan Drama, 269.

¹⁰Hartnoll, ed., Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 1967, 866.

¹¹Esslin, "Violence in Modern Drama," in his Reflections, 177.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Hollis, Harold Pinter, 107-108, gives some examples of critical interpretations of The Homecoming. Perhaps the most incredible interpretation he mentions was that given by David Benedictus in Spectator, who saw Teddy as Pinter who was presenting his work (Ruth) to his family (the public) after an absence of six years.

¹⁴Pinter, Homecoming, 7.

¹⁵Ibid., 9.

¹⁶Ibid., 19.

¹⁷Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁸Nadeau, History of Surrealism, 183-184.

¹⁹Dali, Conquest of the Irrational, 12-17.

²⁰Barr, ed., Fantastic Art, 158.

²¹Poe; "Veil of the Soul" in Galloway, ed., Selected Writings, 498.

²²Pinter, Slight Ache and Other Plays, 104.

²³*Ibid.*, 96.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 99.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 114.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 111-112.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

²⁸Sylvester, Magritte, 18.

²⁹Gablik, "Conversation with René Magritte," Studio International, 173, (March 1967), 128.

³⁰Sylvester, Magritte, 113.

³¹*Ibid.*, 111.

³²*Ibid.*, 1.

³³*Ibid.*, 79.

³⁴Burkman, Dramatic World of Harold Pinter, 77 ff. The element of struggle for a territory is mentioned by Burkman in connection with several of Pinter's plays, including The Caretaker, and indeed this kind of territorial battle is present in the setting and action of the play. However, I find it difficult to make the kind of leap which sees The Caretaker as an example of man's "seeming compulsion to live his life in the image of the cruel ritual of the priesthood of Nemi."

³⁵Pinter, The Caretaker, 43-44.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

³⁷Esslin, Peopled Wound, 111.

³⁸Kerr, Harold Pinter, 9-12.

³⁹Gablik, "Conversation with René Magritte," Studio International, 173, (March 1967), 129-130.

⁴⁰Esslin, Peopled Wound, 175.

⁴¹Ibid., 161.

⁴²Soby, de Chirico, 136.

⁴³Fowlie, Age of Surrealism, 191.

⁴⁴Jung, Man and His Symbols, 46 ff.

⁴⁵Pinter, "Writing for the Theatre," in Popkin, ed., New British Drama, 575-576.

⁴⁶Levy, Surrealism, 89.

⁴⁷Ionesco, Four Plays, 83.

⁴⁸Ibid., 38.

⁴⁹Hall, Silent Language, 62.

⁵⁰Pinter, Tea Party and Other Plays, 15.

⁵¹Pinter, Homecoming, 21.

⁵²Pinter, Birthday Party, 83-84.

⁵³Pinter, Tea Party and Other Plays, 75.

⁵⁴Cage, Silence, 8.

⁵⁵Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence" in her Syles of Radical Will, 13.

⁵⁶Pinter, Slight Ache and Other Plays, 39.

⁵⁷Pinter, Landscape and Silence, 43.

⁵⁸Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence" in her Styles of Radical Will, 19. .

⁵⁹Pinter, "Writing for the Theatre," in Popkin, ed., New British Drama, 579.

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